
T H E

Laws of Poetry

Explain'd and Illustrated.

Gildon (Charles)

T H F

Life of Gildon

Explained and Illustrated

1.2.6.
12

THE
LAWS *of* POETRY,

As laid down by the DUKE of
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
IN HIS

Essay on POETRY,

By the EARL of
ROSCOMMON

IN HIS

Essay on Translated Verse,

And by the LORD

LANSDOWNE

ON

Unnatural Flights in POETRY,

Explain'd and Illustrated.

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. MORLEY, next Door to the Swan and
Hoop Tavern, in Cornhill. M DCC XXI.

13

THE
LAWSON
As illustrated by the DUKE of
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
IN HIS
Essay on POETRY



Essay on the English Verse
and the LONDON
LAWSON
ON
Universal Rights in POETRY
Explained and Illustrated.

LONDON:
Printed for J. Moxley, near Doct to the Green and
Hop Tavern, in Lambeth. M DCC XXII.



To the MOST NOBLE the
DUTCHESS
OF
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE,
AND
NORMANBY, &c.

May it please your GRACE,



THE following Volume,
after many strange de-
lays, being now ready to
appear in the world, I was
soon determin'd to what
illustrious person to address it; because

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DEDICATION.

there was no body, no, not the greatest prince in the world, tho' it were equal to his sovereign protection, from that admirable part of it written by his late GRACE of *Buckinghamshire*, your illustrious husband, could put in so just a claim to that office as your GRACE, upon more than one account.

First, Because there was none that had so near and dear a relation to the most excellent Duke as your GRACE; and next, because there was no body in the world that I know of that had so fine and exquisite a taste in the politer arts as your GRACE has frequently discover'd; so that if the first motive had been wanting, this had been sufficient to have determin'd my choice of your GRACE for a patroness; for who is so fit for a patroness to the best rules that ever were written

ten

DEDICATION.

ten by man, for the establishment of a perfect judgment and knowledge in so noble an art as that of poetry, as a lady who was absolute mistress of both? an excellence that very few men, and much fewer of the fair sex, can justly challenge; which raises your GRACE'S admirable character to such a height of glory, that we cannot think of it without the most profound wonder and veneration.

But if we add this consideration to the nearness and dearness of your relation to the dead Heroe, I must have been ungrateful to his memory, and unjust to your GRACE'S conjugal virtue, to have plac'd any other name at the head of my dedication.

Most illustrious Lady,

The mention of one particular excellence of this great and wonderful

DEDICATION.

person, the late Duke of *Buckinghamshire*, has fill'd my soul so full with his other admirable and uncommon endowments, that I cannot, upon any consideration whatever, entirely suppress my sentiments about them; but I shall be very short in it, because I would avoid the giving any ground to the envious maligners of this great man, (for eminent virtue is never without enemies) but chiefly because I would not revive in your GRACE any uneasy or melancholy reflections on your GRACE's loss.

I shall only therefore take notice, first, of that excellent incorruptness which was visible in his GRACE thro' those eminent posts of dignity and trust which he enjoy'd in all the reigns of the princes under whom he lived. His perfect fidelity to the sovereign who employ'd him, his exact discharge
of

DEDICATION

of the duties of his office, and his constant regard to the publick good, were always the aim and sum of his endeavours, and the only views that his GRACE pursu'd in all his actions.

That he was a consummate statesman is certain; but that he knew not the little arts of some who pretend to that name, or, knowing them, despis'd them, is evident from his conduct; he made not a market of his prince's favour, and his own power, to fill his coffers, to the prejudice of others, and perhaps to the detriment of the Prince he serv'd, and the publick itself. The reason of this was not that he was ignorant of any of the qualities of a just and great statesman, but because he was entirely master of them all; he left those low mean practices to the little tricksters and meer dabblers in politicks; but *he* was

DEDICATION.

was a consummate statesman, and therefore above them.

I shall mention but one thing more of this kind, and that is, that he was a constant friend to the church, which is the duty not only of a good christian, but even of a wise statesman.

To say all that might be said on these heads, would be to swell my epistle to a volume, and yet say no more to your GRACE than what was perfectly known to your GRACE and all the world before. But how great soever his excellence was as a statesman, yet there without doubt he had many powerful rivals; but in his fine taste and judgment of the politer arts, at least in the performance of his *Essay on poetry*, which, with illustrations,

DEDICATION.

illustrations, I here present your GRACE, he had no rival: The glory is entirely his own and peculiar to himself, and will be as lasting as the *English* language, nay, in probability much more lasting.

That part therefore of the following volume is its own protection, and will recommend itself to your GRACE's regard, without any thing that I can urge upon that head; but as my explanations and illustrations of this excellent poem are, as it were, its followers and attendants, as such I must beg your GRACE's protection for them, and I hope they are not entirely unworthy of that favour, which if I shall be so happy as to obtain, I cannot miss of the chief end of this publication, which was to give a testimony to the world
of

DEDICATION.

of my great veneration for my Lord
Duke, and likewise to prove that I
am,

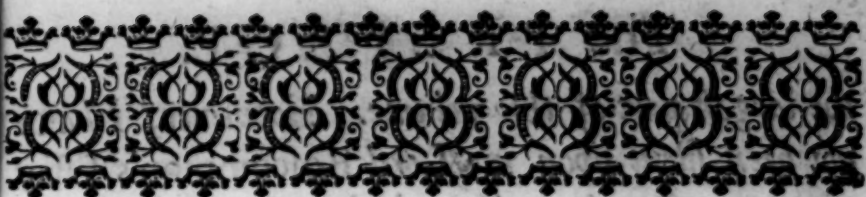
MADAM,

Your GRACE's most humble,

Most devoted, and

Most obedient servant,





THE PREFACE.

THE following Volume consists of the works of three illustrious noblemen; the first and principal is the excellent Essay on poetry, written by the late Duke of Buckinghamshire, and of such general use, and so establish'd a reputation, that it stands in need of no recommendation of mine to the public. It contains precepts as new as delicate, which extend to the whole system of poetry, and which therefore alone, without the help of Aristotle, Horace, or any other critic, ancient or modern, are sufficient to form a fine taste and a solid judgment, both which are extreamly wanted in this nation among the authors and readers of poetry.

The importance therefore of the Essay on poetry being so visible, it cannot justly be wonder'd that my considerations upon it should take up much
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THE PREFACE.

the largest part of this volume. However, I have not been silent upon my Lord Roscommon's Essay upon translated verse, which was recommended to me to be join'd to the former by a person of great quality, and one who was intimate with his late Grace the Duke of Buckinghamshire.

It is true that my Lord Roscommon's Essay has for its chief object translated verse: But since it likewise contains not only a defence of rules in general, but likewise gives us many which relate to composition, I was the more satisfied to pay my obedience to the great man who recommended it, because it was not alien to the design of my undertaking; to compleat which, I thought it very proper to add the third discourse upon Unnatural flights in poetry, written by that ingenious nobleman the present Lord Lansdown.

It is about twenty years since my Lord gave me that poem, with his own explanatory notes, to place in a miscellany which I then published, and from which I now transplant it into this volume, to render perfectly compleat, from English authors only, that system of poetry which I here propose to establish.

*The reader is here taught the necessary rules of poetry by persons of the highest dignity, breeding
and*

The PREFACE.

and fine sense, so that art never can have a more glorious triumph over pretenders than it doth here obtain, under the protection of these three illustrious names.

The common clamour of ill nature, which the children of confusion make against the precepts of harmony and order, must here be entirely silenc'd by the known candor and humanity of the noble authors, which is even evident in the manner of their writing; and the advantage that art has gain'd by them is so solid and secure, that its enemies will never be able to produce three such great men against it.

The nature of the following commentaries, especially the conclusion of what I have said on the first Essay, renders a longer preface superfluous; and therefore I shall not keep the reader, by wanton excursions, any longer in the porch, but suffer him here to enter the building itself.



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against it.

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and therefore I shall not keep the reader, by constant
excursions, any longer in the press, but suffer him
here to enter the building itself.





ESSAY
ON
POETRY,
WITH
COMMENTARY.



F things in which mankind does most
excel,

Nature's chief master-piece is writing
well.

Among the fam'd remains of ancient time,

Soul-moving Poetry shines most sublime:

No sort of work requires so nice a touch,

And, finish'd well, nothing delights so much:

But, Oh! far be it from records of fame,

To grace the vulgar with that sacred name:

B

'Tis

'Tis not a flash of fancy, which sometimes,
 Dazling our minds, sets off the flightest rhimes;
 Bright as a blaze, but in a moment done:
 True wit is everlasting like the Sun;
 Which, tho' sometimes behind a Cloud retir'd,
 Breaks out again, and is by all admir'd.



HE reader need not be put in mind of the judicious choice of the words made use of in these lines, or the beautiful simplicity and easiness of the beginning of this poem; those are observations too obvious to every one to need a monitor; for as every reader begins his perusal of any poem in a perfect calm, so the author ought to take his reader in that very calm, and raise him by degrees to that warmth, which is the parent of our pleasure, and gives a greater or less delight, according to the nature of the subject, and the genius of the poet. Leaving therefore this point as an acknowledg'd truth, I shall proceed to prove the validity and reason of what my illustrious author advances in this place, *viz.*

That *writing well* is, among all those excellencies, which distinguish and dignify the human nature, the chief or principal. This, among the knowing, does not stand in need of any further proof, and will easily be acknowledg'd as a self-evident principle, that can only be disputed by an ignorant caviller. But since it is the mode in our times, that every one that can buy a book, and read it, assumes the authority of

passing

passing his sentence upon the performance : And since there are many, especially among the lady readers, who are endowed with good natural parts, tho' they want the improvement and the strengthening of their reason by the knowledge of art ; I think it will not seem superfluous, more fully to demonstrate and set in a just light the truth of this assertion.

The reader therefore must first consider, that what is here said has not the least regard to the penmanship, that is, to the fairness or badness of the hand-writing, for that is a consideration too mean and low for our author, the work only of the hand, in which the head has very little share. 'Tis true, that the art of writing is of very great use and benefit to mankind, since the business and commerce of the world cannot be, at least with so much ease, maintain'd without it, nor arts and sciences deliver'd and improv'd ; but the writing here design'd is of quite another nature, and as far above this, as the operations of the great and noble faculties of the rational soul are above the mechanick performances of the hand. By *writing well* here is meant the inditing, that is, the conveying our sentiments upon any subject to another, in which are included the invention, disposition, ratiocination, and elocution, or expressing in words, with propriety, elegance, or sublimity, what we have to say, according to the nature of every subject ; for in some, propriety is all that is requir'd ; in others, propriety and elegance ; and in a third sort, propriety, elegance and sublimity. The *mathematicks*, and several doctrines of the lesser arts, seldom rise above propriety, and on very few occasions admit of elegance ; oratory, and poetry, seem the most proper stations for elegance

and sublimity, not but that some part of philosophy may be deliver'd in such a manner as may be truly call'd elegant and sublime; but this is not in the conveyance of the rudiments of that or any other science, where plainness and perspicuity is principally, if not wholly, to be regarded.

This therefore being the meaning of *writing well* in this place, it will now be proper to examine whether it be, as asserted in the text, *Nature's chief master-piece*. To decide this point, we must consider the nature of all the actions and aims of mankind, and then we shall find that they are directed either to the common end which every animal pursues, or to that peculiar end which is only the object of the human mind.

In the first we act as mere animals, and in many things, perhaps, with less sagacity than several beings of the mute creation, and therefore cannot pretend to excel them, or claim a preheminance above them: Among these is the preservation of life by food, and such other necessities as either necessity or convenience requires, and next the propagation of our kind, with most of the sensual pleasures that either attend them, or are begotten by them; nay, it will admit of many weighty arguments to prove, that perhaps the mute creation has a more strong and vivid perception of those pleasures than man can pretend to; for it is certain that several senses of several particular *animals* are more exquisite in them than in man; those that we can find, and have discover'd, are the seeing in some, the hearing in others, the scent or smelling in a third, and the taste in a fourth kind: And as for the feeling, there are examples that make us believe there are animals that excel us in that; nor are these
several

several senses dissipated and distributed singly to particulars, but often unite in the same animal. The greatness and smallness of any pleasure, its intenseness or remissness, I believe, will be granted me to proceed from the perfection or defect of the perception, and that from the strength or weakness of the senses. From hence it will plainly follow, that man does not excel in these particulars, but has only, as one words it, *a younger brother's portion*, and must therefore, to keep up his claim to that superiority in the creation, which almost every man pretends to, tho' certainly not with equal right, find out some advantage above them, peculiar to his own nature, and far different from what they can challenge, and this must be in the superior operations of the mind, no tracks or footsteps of which have hitherto been discover'd in the rest of the creation.

'Tis true that we can perceive that several animals have a sort of thought; but as lively instances as some of them have afforded us, we plainly find that the sum of their thinking, and the highest sagacity that we can discover in them, is the pursuit either of their food or game; the latter indeed being generally a part of the former; but in man we find reason, that, tho' far from being equal in all men, is yet sufficient in every one to lead him to considerations above what we can find in the brutes: First, to society, which reason shews him is absolutely necessary to his nature; without which, man cannot be happy, easy, or safe; and next, it leads him higher yet, to the invention of arts and sciences advantageous to this society; And lastly, it raises him above all this world, by carrying his thoughts to contemplate the eternal cause of

all things, his divine benefactor ; from whence, as he has receiv'd all that he possesses, so it fires his soul with admiration of his perfections, and that adoration which reason tells him is due to that supreme being.

From what has been said, I hope it is pretty plain that man can be said to excel most, only in those things in which his nature differs from that of the rest of the creation. As all those actions and aims of mankind, which are directed to the subsistence and propagation of his species, are, as I have shewn, of a more inferior consideration, and mere *animal* pursuits ; so all those arts which are only directed to the same ends, are of a lower degree of excellence : Such are all the mechanics, all trades, and every pursuit of riches, great part of the *mathematicks*, and indeed every thing that does not directly lead to the improvement of our minds, in the strengthening of our reason, and the polishing of our manners ; for these are the chief characteristicks of man, by which he makes the nearest approaches to that supreme archetype, by whom his soul was form'd ; but the business of *writing well* is wholly employ'd in the consideration of what can improve our reason, polish our manners, and increase our understanding, and is entirely directed to the advancement and satisfaction of the mind ; so that it may be very justly said,

*Of things in which mankind does most excel,
Nature's chief master-piece is writing well.*

I would not be thought, by what I have said, to depreciate or lessen the real value of the *mechanicks* or trades, by which commerce is maintain'd ; I do allow that they are useful to the convenient subsistence of
human

human society: But first, they are only directed to the convenience of subsistence, and are not absolutely necessary to society it self, since we know that there are numerous nations in the world that obtain all the needful benefits of the animal life without them, and even that of society it self; witness the many barbarous people of *Asia*, *Africa*, and *America*, who have either nothing at all of them, or at least so little, that it can scarce be said they have any.

But I will grant a sort of excellence even to these, since they may be made use of to the happiness of mankind; but they excel one another as they more or less participate of the force of the mind, yet in every thing they fall infinitely short of those arts and sciences which come under the notion of *writing well*.

*Among the fam'd remains of ancient time,
Soul-moving poetry shines most sublime.*

The foregoing position being thus establish'd, and prov'd undeniably founded on reason, I shall proceed to show that what follows hath the same most excellent ground, that is, that *poetry* is the *most sublime* of all the writings which the ancients have left us.

Here I should consider the nature of poetry in general, its first rise, its progress, and its perfection. But having done this already in my *Complete Art of Poetry*, I will not repeat what I have there said, but refer my reader to that, where I flatter my self he will find a sufficient defence of this divine art, and a proof that it excels all other arts whatsoever; but he will likewise find, that it is not every plausible versifier that can put in his claim with any manner of right to a

share in this divine art ; the knack of versification has not any thing great and sublime in it, that is at best but the lowly handmaid to the performances of a great poet ; my Lord Duke has admirably distinguish'd this in the expression of *Soul-moving poetry*. Since, indeed, without touching and moving of the soul, verse is but a mean and trifling performance, and, in my opinion, that poetry is the most valuable which moves the most ; and this will evidently give the preference to *Tragedy* above all other kinds of poetry.

I would not be suppos'd to condemn numbers and good versification, especially among the ancients, both *Greeks* and *Latins* ; for numbers among those poets contributed to moving the passions, and touching the soul by the natural harmony of those two languages, but chiefly of the *Greek* ; nor will I deny that some of our own Poets have carry'd the excellence of numbers almost as far as the nature of our tongue will bear ; I only contend that versification is not the principal part of poetry. But I shall say no more upon this head in this place, because it seems to anticipate what I have to offer in my remarks upon some following verses of this *Essay*.

To return therefore to my text, *Among the fam'd remains, &c.* This is a truth that nothing but consummate ignorance can dispute ; for among all the remains of ancient *Greece*, the wonderful parent of all politeness, what is there that appears with so sublime a glory as *Homer*, and the other *Greek* poets of the first form ? for *Homer's* glory is not only immoveably fixt and establish'd by the universal applause of all the *Greek* nations, but confirm'd by the learned of all other countries for above two thousand years. The
same

same may be said, in some proportion, of *Sophocles*, *Euripides*, and several others ; and this glory has been only contested by some modern pedants, or half-witted and injudicious authors of these latter times, but with so little ground in reason, so little force of argument, that whatever they have offer'd, sufficiently proves them extremely unequal to the task they have undertaken, and indeed too visibly discovers, that they owe this immeasurable assurance only to their ignorance of these authors, both as to their language and design.

Scaliger moves both our laughter and contempt in those fantastick cavils which he has given the world upon *Homer* ; for is it not highly ridiculous that a person of our times, and one who came very late to the study of the *Greek* tongue, should pretend to decide upon its beauties and defects, when it was a dead language, against the practice of *Homer*, whose excellence in that particular was acknowledg'd by all the polite and learned *Grecians*, when it was a living and flourishing language, and spread over great part of *Asia* and *Europe* ; and when, by consequence, its beauties and defects must be better known to his readers, than they can be to any modern author, or student in that tongue ? But I think *Scaliger* has had the fate of all who have written against the ancients, that is, soon to come into neglect and contempt ; he was, 'tis true, a great reader, and a laborious student, and had made a considerable progress in the critical learning of *Greek* and *Latin*, which had puff'd up his vanity so much, as to make him think himself superior to *Homer*, and all the other poets and orators, both *Greek* and *Latin*, at least, if we may judge by his treatment of them in his writings.

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The next author that I can remember of this kind, is a man who even wants *Scaliger's* attainments, and pretends to criticize upon the *Greek Poets, Orators and Historians*, without knowing any thing of their language; I mean *Monsieur Perault*, who has set up for an advocate of the moderns against the ancients, but still with worse success than even *Scaliger* himself; at least, he has had the ill fortune to fall into the hands of such an adversary, whose very name and appearing against him were indeed almost a confutation of all he had offer'd; I mean the great *Boileau*, who has in his writings abundantly shown how very unfit *Monsieur Perault* was for so great an undertaking, and that he has fail'd so egregiously in his attempt, that he has not gain'd the least point of what he contended for, and has reap'd no other advantage from all that he has publish'd against the ancients, than to convince the world that he knew nothing of them.

A third, who likewise has appear'd in *France*, is *Monsieur De la Motte*, who would needs give the *French* world, as *Scaliger* had pretended to do, a proof how much better he writ than *Homer*; but this gentleman has not escap'd a punishment equal to the former, for that learned and ingenious gentlewoman *Madam Dacier*, as eminent for her fine taste, as skill in *Greek* and *Latin*, has abundantly confuted and expos'd *Monsieur De la Motte's* extravagant vanity, in contending for the prize with *Homer*.

I have lately heard of one *Monsieur L' Abbe Terrason*, that has undertaken the cause against *Homer* and his defender *Madam Dacier*, tho' I have reason to think that he has not met with better success in his performance than any of the rest, and I do not question but that

that excellent Lady, whom he has attack'd, will sufficiently discover the weakness of his attempt.

If such enemies have arisen to the ancients in *France*, where there have been such eminent instances of a good taste, it is no wonder that in *England*, where our taste is generally so bad, there should have been found men to appear in the same abandon'd cause. The first of any note, that I remember here, is *Mr. Wotton*; but then he is more moderate in his charge than the *Frenchmen* whom I have named; and next, he seems as it were to acknowledge the superiority of the ancients in *Oratory* and *Poetry*; and lastly, he has found a confuter of his errors, and a just and generous defender of the ancients in *Sir William Temple*. It has been indeed of late years the vogue of the *little wits*, and talking pretenders of the town, to laugh at, and ridicule the ancients, especially in their poetry, in which they most excel; but all their arguments, (if I may be guilty of such an abuse of the word as to give them that name) evidently show, that whatever they say proceeds from their ignorance of the *Ancients*. The first that I know, who collected the force of all their *little tattle* upon this head together, is one *Farquhar*, who, having written some taking *Comedies*, as they call them, vainly assum'd, from that success upon our stage, an authority to appear as an advocate for the poets of *London*, against those of *Athens*. But what wretched stuff has he produc'd upon this occasion? too scandalously mean indeed to need a serious and particular confutation; all that bore the least show, or face of argument, I have sufficiently answer'd in my *Complete Art of Poetry*, without mentioning his Name; and perhaps I may have occasion, before I have finish'd these *Commentaries*,

mentaries, slightly to touch upon him more than once. But this I must say for Mr. *Farquhar* himself, that even he has not pretended to give the preference in *Poetry* to the *English Dramatick Poets*; but allowing the *Athenian Poets* their just praise in writing properly for the *Athenian Stage*, only asserts that our poets write more properly for us; and the reason he gives is, that *Athens* and *London* are not the same cities: But to make that argument of any validity, he should have prov'd that human nature and reason in *London* was not human nature and reason in *Athens*; for as for the difference of customs and manners, tho' absolutely necessary to be observ'd, yet that does not come up to the decision of the merits of the cause as to the poem in general.

I am extremely concern'd to find in the number of the enemies of *Homer*, and in him of all that is valuable in the ancient poetry, a gentleman whom, for his excellent performances in some parts of poetry, I could heartily wish of my side: And indeed I may say that he is the only man that has appear'd against the ancients with a talent or genius that qualifies him to be their companion in reputation; but I know not how it happens, that this ingenious gentleman, I am afraid, for want of weighing thoroughly the merits of the cause, has thought fit to appear in print against *Homer* and *Virgil*; the person I here mean is Sir *Richard Blackmore*, who, in his Essay upon *Epick Poetry*, has appear'd with the ostentation of a triumph, where I believe I shall make it evident that he has not so much as deserv'd an ovation. But what I have to say upon this head will come properly in my *Commentaries* upon what is offer'd in the *Essay on Poetry* on the *Epick Poem*; but I could heartily wish, that my Duty
to

to truth, reason, and the province I have undertaken, would excuse me from meddling with a gentleman, for whom on all other occasions I have a very great respect ; but since what he has publickly endeavour'd to establish, against the honour and just glory of *Homer* and *Virgil*, receives a force from the authority of his name, I think my self oblig'd to prove the mistakes he has fallen into, either by too overweening a partiality to himself and some of his own performances, or by a very culpable neglect of weighing the validity of *Aristotle's Precepts*, and confuting them by evident reason. But more of this in the place to which I have referred my reader.

But had these authors made good any part of their charge against the *Ancients*, it would not at all lessen the truth of what my illustrious author here asserts ; because if, as they contend, the *Ancients* were less perfect in *Poetry* than they would have the moderns to be, it does not follow that their *Poetry* is not the sublimest of their writings, for without doubt the same gentlemen would load the *Greeks*, in all their other performances, with at least equal defects, tho' I believe with equal success ; and therefore it is still evident, that *Among the fam'd remains of antiquity, soul-moving poetry shines most sublime* ; for which we have the testimony of the *Ancients* themselves, who acknowledge that *Demosthenes*, and the other eloquent Demagogues of *Athens*, who by the force of their orations led the people wherever they pleas'd, learnt all their eloquence from *Homer*, his *Nestor* and *Ulysses* being the guides they followed, to reach and govern the hearts of the people. From the same *Homer* they confess that their greatest generals were instructed in the art of war, and
their

their statesmen in that of government ; nay, even that the most valuable lessons of the philosophers were drawn from the same poet ; and this last part is confirm'd by a *Roman* author, *Horace* I mean, in his epistle to *Lollius*, who assures us that *Homer* has taught us morality much better than *Chrysippus* and *Cranior*, two philosophers of a very considerable reputation in those times ; from all which it will appear, that as no particular prose author of *Greece* it self could pretend to all those excellencies which are so eminent in *Homer* ; so, that this maxim of the *Essay*, that *Soul-moving Poetry shines most sublime*, is establish'd beyond all manner of controversy.

Most sublime in its cause or rise, most sublime in its matter, most sublime in its manner, and most sublime in its aim or end ; most sublime in its cause or rise, if we respect either its antiquity, or the occasion which produc'd it ; for poetry is as old as mankind, coeval with human race, and was invented as soon as man thought of addressing either his prayers or his praise to heaven, and that was as soon as man reflected on the supreme being that had given him life ; for the first poetry is agreed to have been praise and thanksgiving to God ; it was therefore truly sublime in its cause and rise ; it was likewise sublime in its matter, or the subjects of which it treated ; that is, not only the praise and thanksgiving of and to the Deity, which, as I have said, gave it birth, but it celebrated eminent virtue in great men or heroes ; it taught all the useful and necessary arts that could contribute to the happiness of mankind, nor was there any thing instructive which was not originally deliver'd in verse ; as religion, or the wor-
ship

ship of God, the moral duties of men, and those political maxims which were necessary to the subsistence of human society.

It shines likewise *most sublime* in its manner, which consists of number and harmony, by which its instructions were convey'd with pleasure. It is likewise *most sublime* in its aim or end ; for it is not only directed to praise and thanksgiving, to the celebration of great men, and great virtues, and those other things mention'd already, but to the polishing mankind, refining and moderating their passions, and bringing them into perfect subjection to reason, without which we should seek for happiness in vain ; but the wonders that this sublime art has done in the world, we find thus describ'd in *Horace's Art of Poetry*, as translated by my lord Rescommon :

Orpheus, inspir'd by more than human power,
Did not (as Poets feign) tame savage beasts,
But men as lawless and as wild as they,
And first dissuaded from that rage and blood.
Thus when Amphion built the Theban wall,
They feign'd the stones obey'd his magick lute.
Poets, the first instructors of mankind,
Brought all things to their proper native use :
Some they appropriated to the gods,
And some to publick, some to private ends :
Promiscuous love by marriage was restrain'd,
Cities were built, and useful laws were made.
So ancient is the pedigree of verse,
And so divine a poet's function.
Then Homer's and Tyrtæus' martial muse
Waken'd the world, and sounded loud alarms.
To verse we owe the sacred oracles,

And

*And our best precepts of morality.
 Some have by verse obtain'd the love of kings,
 Who with the muses ease their weary'd minds.
 Then blush not, noble Piso, to protect
 What gods inspire, and kings delight to hear.*

I think I may conclude from these considerations, and all that has been urg'd upon this head, that it is sufficiently evident; that

*Among the fam'd remains of ancient time,
 Soul-moving poetry shines most sublime.*

From this eulogy of the ancients, the *Essay* brings us naturally and easily to the consideration of poetry in general.

*No sort of work requires so nice a touch,
 And, finish'd well, nothing delights so much.*

The truth of these lines is founded not only upon the best authority, but reason; for tho' all sorts of polite writing require care and correctness, yet poetry challenges a nicer touch, something above all other arts, something more perfect and more accomplish'd, something that not only touches the soul, but penetrates into its inmost recesses, fully gratifies all its great faculties, and moves its passions; giving by that means a pleasure peculiar to it self, and much above all that we can derive from any other sort of writing. But to obtain this effect, it ought to be touch'd in the most nice and fine manner; for the pleasure it affords is greater or less, as the source of
 * pleasure

pleasure is manag'd with greater, or less address.

'Tis certain, that tho' the author of the *Essay* has been pleas'd to take notice only of the pleasure of a well finish'd piece of poetry, yet there is nothing valuable in that art that does not convey instruction as well as delight. But the reason why my Lord has only taken notice of the latter, I take to be, because whatever instruction we receive from poetry must be deliver'd with pleasure, which if wanting, we never can arrive at the profitable; and this is the reason why *Horace* will not admit of a mediocrity in poetry, because an indifferent poet can never give us that delight which is absolutely necessary to make his instructions of any force, since the very instructions themselves are the effect of the pleasure we receive from the performance; so that if that be languid and weak, the very end of this sort of writing is lost. *Horace* says,

*Mediocribus esse poetis
Non di, non homines, non concessere columnæ.*

Which my lord *Roscommon* translates thus :

*Some things admit of mediocrity :
A counsellor or pleader at the bar
May want Massala's powerful eloquence,
Or be less read than deep Casselius ;
Yet this indifferent lawyer is esteem'd.
But no authority of Gods nor men
Allow of any mean in poesy.*

My lord has omitted here one point of what his author has deliver'd, and I am afraid has not come

up to the other two ; the omitted point is the *Columna*, of which he has taken no manner of notice, and which indeed I think too mean a consideration to come into the merits or demerits of poetry ; the reason, without doubt, of this maxim of *Horace* is what I have already urg'd, viz. that the peculiar business of poetry is to please, but mediocrity excluding this pleasure is not to be allow'd. But here I cannot omit a sort of an objection made by a kind of *Scepticks* in *Criticisim*, and that is, that considering the variety of readers that are in the world, it will be a hard matter to determine what writings give pleasure, and what do not, since the worst authors are not without their admirers ; and where *Milton* has one, *Quarles* has fifty ; tho' this perhaps may be solv'd by what my lord *Dorset* says :

*Wine in its full perfection of decay
Turns vinegar, and comes again in play.*

So that the best and the worst poets seem to have the same reward of their writings in the particular set of their admirers. But then this, you will say, will not reach the *mediocres Poetæ*, the indifferent Poets, who are neither sovereignly good, nor execrably bad ; and yet we find that *Silius Italicus*, *Valerius Flaccus*, *Statius*, and some others, have liv'd a great many years, and found not only readers, but learned commentators too : But in answer to this, we must observe, that it is certain that these learned commentators have not been able to set these indifferent poets upon a foot with *Virgil* and *Horace*, *Ovid* and *Catullus*, at least with the true judges of Poetry ; and indeed these

commentators

commentators have only shew'd themselves skill'd in the *dic'tion*, a mere grammatical excellence, and far inferior to the proof of an excellent poet, and plainly shewed, that they knew nothing of the superior qualities, which do, and ought to distinguish a great poet from a versifier. But it is not the long life these indifferent poets have obtain'd, nor the *commentaries* they have met with from the ill taste of some learned grammarians, that can render them equal to the great poets of antiquity; nor can that languid pleasure they have sometimes perhaps given to pedants, and to the vulgar readers, raise them up to any claim to those exalted transports, which can only give that pleasure that is required from Poetry; and can only touch the greater and more elevated spirits; for it is to those alone, that Poetry in its delight and use is directed; for we are not here to regard the mean and low satisfaction of the many; and therefore the noble author under our consideration proceeds very justly, when he says,

'Tis not a flash of fancy, which sometimes,
Dazling our minds, sets off the slightest rhimes;
Bright as a blaze, but in a moment done:
True wit is everlasting, like the sun;
Which, tho' sometimes behind a cloud retir'd,
Breaks out again, and is by all admir'd.

As there is nothing more judicious than this observation, so there is nothing more necessary to the reformation of that abandon'd taste, which has generally

rally prevail'd in this nation, where we have very falsely attributed the highest perfection of Poetry to this *flash of fancy*, to a sparkling point, an epigrammatick brilliant, when all the greater qualities of a just Poet are wanting. I am almost afraid to give instances in this particular, because there are establish'd authors among us, who owe their reputation to nothing else; yet I will venture to say, that to take away these points, this *flash of fancy* from my lord *Rochester*, from great part of *Cowley's* Verses, especially his *Mistress*, and even some of *Waller's*, would be to render them very insipid, at least in those parts where this is all their merit. If this may be said with any justice, as I think it may, of these establish'd authors whom I have named, it will hold much stronger of even the taking poems of most, if not all our more modern writers, who have generally ow'd their success to a happy simile or two, a lively description, or some shining points, whilst all the rest has been extreamly languid, if not insipid; and for this reason their poems, how successful soever at first, whatever clamorous applause they have met with at their appearance, have quickly sunk into obscurity and oblivion, and their fate seems to have participated of their nature; for as they were born from a *flash of fancy*, and applauded by fancy alone, when that was spent, vanish'd of a sudden away into forgetfulness, as all things must do, which are the product of fancy without judgment, as all things must do, where true wit, that is, a true poetick genius, spreads not through the whole; for

True wit is everlasting, like the Sun.

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That is, it will appear in every part, tho' differently, throughout the work of a great and true Poet. It is confess'd, that in the greatest poets the height of genius does not shine equally in all parts of the poem, as is plain from the immortal *Homer*, *Virgil*, and *Milton*. *Homer* himself has been observ'd by *Horace* sometimes to nod; and it is obvious to every judicious reader, that *Virgil* has not every where the same vivacity or force; and it is equally plain, that *Milton*, for many lines together, is far from being so elevated and lofty (I will not say flat and low) as in the general performance of his poem; but then all these three great poets shine out again in their own exalted lustre, which justifies what our *Essay* affirms:

*Which, though sometimes behind a cloud retir'd,
Breaks out again, and is by all admir'd.*

I know my lord *Roscommon*, in his *Essay upon translated verse*, would needs have it, that the flatnesses, if I may so call them, or negligences which are found in some of *Virgil's* verses, were in that Poet a studied art, and not a defect; for thus he says.

*Not thus our heroes of the former days
Deserv'd and gain'd their never-fading bays;
For I mistake, or far the greatest part,
Of what some call neglect, was study'd art.
When Virgil seems to trifle in a line,
'Tis like a warning-piece, which gives the sign,
To wake your fancy, and prepare your fight,
To reach the noble height of some unusual flight.*

But as this is only my lord's particular opinion, and will hold good in defence of *Homer* and *Milton*, as well as of *Virgil*; so I presume it is not entirely to be depended upon; and *Horace* gives a more natural, and, if I mistake not, a more just excuse for these three great poets.

Opere in tanto fas est obrepere somnum.

In so great a work the poet may be allow'd sometimes to nod; for neither the nature of the subject, nor the human capacity, will always permit the poet to express an equal vivacity and loftiness; but then the genius of the poet will again shine out, and be by all admir'd.

Thus it is evident, from what we have consider'd of the *Essay*, that *writing well is nature's chief master-piece*; that *soul-moving poetry is the most sublime* of all good writing; that this poetry is not a flash of fancy, but a more solid and valuable quality, that, like a heavenly fire, animates the whole poem, and by that means draws the admiration of all; that is, that in a good poem there must always shine a great genius, which, tho' it must be born with the poet, and is not to be obtain'd by study and art, yet study and art are absolutely necessary to give this true genius of poetry its full and admirable lustre; for there never was a man, at least among the ancients, that had this superiour genius, who ventur'd to appear in publick without great study, application, long practice, and a mastery in the art he profess'd. Among the moderns, indeed, we have had men appear, and meet with applause, only by the force of a strong imagination,

tion, as *Ariosto* in *Italy*, and *Shakespear* in *England*; but then they fall much short in the judgment of the learned and knowing, who can only decide upon this head, of *Homer*, *Sophocles*, *Euripides*, *Virgil*, and *Horace*. But, on the other hand, it must be confess'd in excuse of *Ariosto* and *Shakespear*, that they had the misfortune of falling into ignorant times, and unpolish'd nations, which depriv'd them of the knowledge of art, that would have regulated their exuberant genius's, and have given them that perfection which the ancients enjoy'd.

On the contrary, *Homer*, *Sophocles*, *Euripides*, *Virgil*, and *Horace*, flourish'd in nations, and ages when learning and art every where prevail'd; and in this the *Greek Poets* had even the advantage of the *Romans*; for they writ to a people of the most refin'd taste and politeness that ever appear'd in the world, a people of that vivacity and judgment, that they knew how to relish and encourage excellence wherever it was found; and this judiciousness was not there confin'd to a few, but spread through the whole nation, and every *Grecian*, almost, was a judge of a good performance, nay, and a very nice animadverter upon the defects of the poets, as is plain from two instances. *Euripides* writ a play upon *Bellerophon*, in which he brings in *Bellerophon* speaking in the praise of money, and the advantages it procures to man; the whole audience rose up, and would not let the play go on, till *Euripides* came out upon the stage, and said to them: *Gentlemen, 'tis true, I have brought on BELLEROPHON speaking in vindication of avarice; but I beg your patience only to see how I punish him before the end of the TRAGEDY*; upon which the audience were appeas'd,

peas'd, and went away satisfy'd with the punishment the poet had inflicted on the transgressor. The other instance is of the tragedy of *Amphiaraus*, written, if I remember right, by *Agatho*, *Polyides*, or *Theodectes*, mention'd by *Aristotle*; which play was damn'd by the nice and judicious *Athenian* audience, for what we should now think a very small peccadillo. The fact is thus; the prophet *Amphiaraus*, in the view of the audience, goes into the temple, and afterwards he was said to be elsewhere; but because he did not come out of the temple again in the sight of that audience who saw him go in, they damn'd the play; how then would most of our plays have been borne by that nice audience, since they abound in errors much more absurd and irrational, and yet are cry'd up among us for wonderful performances? But the case is this; *Agatho* was judg'd by consummate knowledge, ours by only an assuming ignorance; there, the greatest name was no protection against visible defects; here, the most monstrous defects receive a sanction from a popular name.

The *Greeks* were a people that did nothing almost without some design and reason, not only in poetry, but in architecture it self; and thus *Vitruvius* observes, that in the structure of temples, they follow'd that order that express'd the character of the deity to which the temple was dedicated. The *Doric*, that is the most solid, was us'd in the temple of *Mars*, *Minerva*, and *Hercules*. The temples of *Venus*, *Proserpina*, the *Nymphs*, &c. were built of the *Corinthian* order, which is more spruce and delicate, adorn'd with garlands and flowers, and all the ornaments of architecture. The *Ionic* was consecrated to *Diana*, *Juno*, and

and the other deities, whose characters were express'd by the nature of that order, obliging the builders to a medium between the solidity of the *Doric*, and the spruceness of the *Corinthian* order.

Nor was their care of propriety in this particular of *architecture* confin'd to the ornamental part of building; it extended even to the materials; for the temple of *sleep* was built of black *marble*; that of *Apollo*, &c. of white; and so of the rest.

Thus likewise in *musick*, they had their several *modes* proper to the subject of their songs; as the *Phrygian*, the *Lydian*, the *Doric*, &c. according as the subject was grave, solemn, blight, soft, and the like; for they never mingle promiscuously all manner of movements in the same piece, as the modern masters of *musick* have done.

If this fine and polite people did nothing in *architecture* and *musick*, without this judicious regard to design and propriety, much less did they do so in *painting*, *sculpture*, and *poetry*, as is evident from those excellent remains of their *sculpture* and *poetry*, and the accounts of their performance in *painting*. All their works were perfectly regular, and of a piece, without any injudicious mixture of things of different natures: They never join'd the *pastoral* and *lyric* to the *epic poem*, as *Tasso* and *Cowley* have done; they never mingled *tragedy* and *comedy*, things so opposite in themselves, as our *English* writers, in spite of nature and reason, have frequently done in their *tragi-comedies*, as they call them.

In *Greece*, that country of harmony and order, every subject had its allotted station, some in the *elegy*, some in the *lyric*, some in the *tragic*, and some
in

in the *comic* scenes, according to their different nature.

This regularity and order was one cause of the excessive pleasure that these wise and judicious people deriv'd from poetry; and the want of this is, perhaps, one of the chief reasons that the moderns have so much a more languid relish of it, because confusion can never produce a strong and lively pleasure.

But, besides this natural regularity of the people, they had, generally speaking, a sublime and enthusiastic taste, and a large portion of the poetic genius was spread thro' all degrees, which still heighten'd their pleasure in all poetical performances; of which there are a thousand instances, tho' I shall only insist here upon two, and those I make choice of, because they are not drawn from the *Athenians*, but one from the rough *Lacedemonians*, and the other from the *Sicilians*.

When *Lyfander* had taken *Athens*, it was debated among the commanders of *Sparta*, whether they should destroy the city, or not; and, after many arguments *pro* and *con*, the more favourable resolution of sparing it was taken, by the influence of some verses out of the *Electra* of *Euripides*, which were repeated to the chiefs upon that occasion. So that *Athens* it self, that had always appear'd so fond of poetry, and had nourish'd the poets in so signal a manner, found now its preservation from the verses of one of her sons.

The other instance that I shall give, is of the same force of poetry upon the minds of the *Sicilians*, who were originally *Greek* colonies, and still retain'd both their language and value for poetry, and had amongst themselves considerable poets, such as *Stesichorus* and

Theocritus.

Theocritus. When *Nicias*, the *Athenian* general, was routed, and his whole army dissipated, and in great part destroy'd, many of those who escaped the fight and slaughter, not only saved their lives, but furnish'd themselves with abilities to get home to their own country, by repeating to, and teaching the *Sicilians* several of the verses of *Euripides*. But if we should look into *Athens* it self, we shall find that polite people sitting whole days to hear *tragedies*, *comedies*, or the recital of other poems : And yet these *Athenians* were not a loose, effeminate, and luxurious people, but a most brave and warlike nation ; so eminent for their wars, that *Plutarch*, in a fragment among his *Symposiacs*, seems to determine, and gives various instances to prove, that they were greater and more illustrious for their excellence in arms, than for their arts of peace ; plainly shewing, that to take away the warlike exploits of the *Athenians* from the *Greek* historians, they must destroy much the larger part of the histories of that nation.

But besides this warlike inclination of the people of *Athens*, they were also the most mercantile of any in the world, for they drove on all the trade of the then known world ; and *Athens* was the *emporium* not only of *Europe*, but *Asia* and *Africa*, and, by the greatness of their trade, was the richest of any city of those ages : Yet neither their warlike temper, nor their pursuit of wealth by trade, interfer'd with their love of and favour to poetry. That which contributed to this was, first, their lively and strong passions, which are always eminent in people of wit and fine parts ; next, their inquisitive nature, which led them to examine thoroughly into every thing, and
could

could not rest satisfy'd without knowing the grounds and reasons of all the objects of their enquiry.

And *thirdly*, which indeed is the consequence of the last, their general knowledge and proficiency in all sorts of learning. So that they might be said indeed to be a nation of learned men; nay, even the women themselves were not confin'd, as now, to the needle, and the art of dressing and setting out their persons, but found time enough to have an insight into the finer arts and sciences: And all this proceeded from a bright education, which was not attended with the incumbrance, nor clog'd with the forbidding fatigue of the study of strange languages, that takes up so much time in our approaches to learning; but all fine literature was taught in their own mother-tongue, and that not only in *Athens*, but thro' all the other *Greek* nations of *Asia* and *Europe*.

Among this polite people, whenever a great genius of poetry appear'd, it was sure to please, *and be by all admir'd*.

This being the taste, and these the qualifications, of the *Greek* nations, it is no wonder that they took care to reward the poets in a particular manner, which they did by peculiar immunities and privileges granted to them, and by such other benefits as were necessary to render their lives and subsistence comfortable and affluent: Thus, upon the loss of *Eupolis* in a sea-fight, there was a law made, that no Poet, for the future, should ever hazard his life in war; and *Sophocles*, besides the large rewards, or price which was paid him by the state for every particular piece of his composition, had the government of *Samos* given him, as an additional acknowledgment for
his

his *tragedy* of *Antigone* ; so that we may imagin how considerable the profits that this poet made of his writings were, since he writ above a hundred tragedies, and liv'd to a very great age.

There is one incident of his life very remarkable, and which I will not here omit, because it will shew not only the great deference which the *Athenians* paid him, but prove their relish of things of this nature. The fact is thus given us by *Cicero* himself, in his book *De Senectute*.

The sons of *Sophocles*, unworthy of so great a father, were uneasy to come into a full possession of all his fortune, and the entire management of his whole estate, pretending that his great age had made him almost a child again, and render'd him wholly unfit to take care of his affairs. The cause came naturally before proper judges, and *Sophocles* was to speak for himself; the plea he produc'd was the *tragedy* of *OEdipus-Coloneus*, which is still extant, and left it to the judges to determine, whether the man that could write that *tragedy* were unfit to take care of his own affairs. By this conduct his sons lost their cause, the judges giving it for *Sophocles* against them. I am afraid that had his cause been to have been try'd in *Westminster-hall*, he would scarce, by the same method, have gain'd the same effect; but he liv'd in *Athens*, the region of politeness it self; we in the dull flegmatick northern corner of the world, where politeness is almost a stranger.

This fineness of taste the spirit of Poetry continu'd in vigour, not only during the unshaken liberties of *Greece*, but even after the terrible shocks these suffer'd from the successors of *Alexander* the Great. In the

the time of *Ptolomy-philadelphus*, the greatest patron of all manner of learning that ever was in the world, we find several eminent *Greek poets* in all parts of poetry, especially seven *Tragic poets*, who were look'd upon in those days of knowledge as considerable rivals of *Sophocles* and *Euripides* themselves; tho' their works, except some few fragments, are entirely lost.

Tho' this cannot be said of the *Romans*, whose application to the fine arts was late, and whose general pursuits were very different, and the education of their youth, as *Horace* complains, much less noble; yet oratory and poetry appear'd for a while in almost as great perfection as in *Greece*; I mean, from the time of *Cicero* to the end of the reign of *Augustus Caesar*; for *Cicero* in oratory disputes the prize with *Demosthenes* himself, and *Virgil* is by many set on a foot with *Homer*; and *Horace* for the Ode with *Pindar*, *Anacreon*, and the other *Greek Lyrics*. *Ovid*, *Tibullus* and *Propertius* in *Elegy*, and *Catullus* for the *Epigram* and *Lyrics*, are not far behind the *Grecians*; nor must I forget the *Bucolics* and *Georgics* of *Virgil*, which, some of the learned contend, are equal to any thing produc'd by the *Greeks* on these subjects. But then it must be confess'd that the *Latin poets*, how excellent soever, ow'd that excellence to the *Greeks*, who had shewn them what it was to write well upon all subjects, and left them such illustrious examples in every kind of Poetry, as depriv'd them of the glory of the invention of any, except the *Sa-tire* alone, which was wholly and entirely *Roman*; however, to come up so near to these immortal originals, as to be able to dispute the prize of glory with them, is a praise that few or none can put in a just claim to, but the *Romans*.

This great, this singular success, this peculiar excellence of the *Latin Poets* in the *Augustan* age, next to the great genius of the poets themselves, and their indefatigable application to their study of the *Greeks*, was deriv'd from that extraordinary encouragement given to them by *Augustus*, at the instance and recommendation of *Mecenas*, the greatest statesman that ever yet appear'd in the world; for he did not provide for *Virgil*, *Horace*, *Varius*, *Tucca*, and others, by putting them into places, the duties of which might prove necessary avocations from the uninterrupted pursuit of their studies, but furnish'd them with plentiful and independent estates; and at this time also a good taste flourish'd among the people, so that a great poetical genius could not shine out without *being by all admir'd*. The causes of the decay of this fine taste we shall by and by see in a quotation from *Madam Dacier* upon this subject.

But alas! when we leave these happy climates, and turn our melancholy eyes to our own unpolish'd soil, how is the glorious *Scene* shifted? and what a wretched view comes in its place? for tho' there have appear'd even in this climate several great genius's, several poets of the first excellence; yet we may say; that we never had one patron that could justly claim that name, except *Sir Philip Sidney*, who was every way qualified by genius, judgment, learning, and inclination, to have equal'd the *Roman Mecenas*; but *Death* took him away so soon, that he could not give those admirable proofs of his zeal for the *British* muses, which a longer life would certainly have discover'd.

It must be confess'd indeed, that there have in this nation appear'd four or five noblemen who have prefer'd

fer'd and taken care of men who have come to their knowledge by some little poetical performance; but then first, this favour has seldom or never been shew'd to men of real art, or of a consummate genius; and next, their favours have been of such a nature, as shew'd that they were not design'd as encouragements of poetry, but given to the men entirely to divert them from the pursuit of that study, and to engage them in business and the chace of wealth; and therefore what they have done upon these occasions, cannot by any means entitle them to the glorious name of *patrons* of that art; and this made *Ben Johnson* say, that *he had known many make their fortunes by using Poetry as a mistress, but not one by taking her to wife.* But tho' we have had no *Patrons* of poetry, except *Sir Philip Sidney*, in this nation, yet we have not been without some very eminent poets, a fate peculiar to *England*; for poetry never appear'd in any other nation in any manner of eminence, without extraordinary encouragement, but here without the least.

Chaucer was the first, that is of any consideration, who enrich'd his mother-tongue with poetry; but *Chaucer* was a man of quality, a knight of the garter, and of so considerable a fortune as to marry into the family of *John of Gaunt*, the father of our *Henry the fourth*, and grandfather to the second *English* monarch who conquer'd *France*; so that he had no need of encouragement to exert that excellent genius, of which he was master, in poetry. After him we had no man that made any figure in *English* verse, till the *Earl of Surrey*, in the time of *Henry the eighth*, who very much improv'd our *English* numbers.

After

After the glorious *Queen Elizabeth* had thoroughly establish'd the reformation, the spirit of poetry seem'd to begin in a pleasing dawn to spread more wide, and that in several kinds. Tho' most of those first rude essays towards it are lost, yet we have still *Sir Philip Sidney*, whose *Arcadia* *Sir William Temple* prefers to all performances of that kind, and to which he allows the second rank after the antients. *Spencer*, whose *Eclogues* are by some put on a foot with those of *Theocritus* and *Virgil*, and are prais'd by *Sir Philip Sidney* himself, in that happy age gave this nation a wonderful proof of his excellent genius in poetry, in his *Fairy Queen*, and makes us wish that he had rather chosen *Homer* and *Virgil*, with whom he was perfectly acquainted, for his pattern, than *Ariosto*, whom he very much excell'd. But what was the fate of this great man? why after the death of his patron, *Sir Philip Sidney*, he starv'd.

In the same reign likewise appear'd another great, but very irregular genius in *Shakespear*; but he being a *Player* as well as a *Poet*, the writer was handsomly supported and rewarded by the *Actor*; for from the first appearance of the rude *Drama* in the *English* tongue, it was so popular, that it enrich'd most of those who were concern'd in the management of it, and *Shakespear* himself left above three hundred pounds a year, acquir'd by that means.

Next in time we must place the immortal *Ben Johnson*, a man not only of compleat learning, but of the most consummate comick genius that ever appear'd in the world, ancient or modern; but I don't find that he met with encouragement which bore any manner of proportion to his merit: However, the pro-

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pension of the people to theatrical entertainments produc'd so considerable an emolument to the poet, as well as the player, that we find the *playwrights* about this time grew very numerous; but there were none else of any great merit, not excepting *Beaumont* and *Fletcher* themselves, who at best have only written two or three tolerable *Comedies*.

The next I shall mention is Mr. *Waller*; but he was a man of fortune, and stood not in need of any encouragement from others. To him I may add Sir *John Suckling* and Sir *John Denham*; the first being a very gallant writer, the second a very good one in one or two pieces, but they were likewise men of independent fortunes.

The last and greatest of all that I shall much insist upon, is the immortal *Milton*, who, without the help of encouragement from the state, or any particular great and powerful man, equal'd the greatest Poets of antiquity, who had the happiness of enjoying all the encouragement of *Greece* and *Rome*; but then *Milton* was likewise master of an independent fortune, which, tho' not considerable in it self, was yet sufficient to answer all his demands and desires, and to give him that happy tranquillity and ease which 'tis absolutely necessary a Poet should enjoy, to make him capable of producing works truly perfect and admirable.

I might here mention several comick writers after the restoration, and some few who have perform'd very well in *tragedy*, especially *Otway* in his *Orphan* and *Venice preserv'd*; but those gentlemen found no patrons, no encouragement worthy their labours and extraordinary merit that way.

I may,

I may, perhaps, seem to have done an injustice; in allowing but one patron to Poetry in this nation, since that great and brave prince, *Richard* the first, was not only a Poet himself, but a great favourer of the *Provencial* Poets, who were the only people of that age, that made any figure in verse, and from whom *Petrarch*, and the first *Italian* versifiers, borrow'd their manner, and most of their beauties.

I mention'd not this king as an *English* patron : because all his favours were bestow'd upon foreign poets ; but this might be, because none of his own country at that time appear'd worthy of his royal encouragement.

Thus it appears, that we have had several considerable Poets in *England*, and some few of the first magnitude, without any encouragement from our great men ; but their remissness in this particular cannot proceed from their being naturally penurious in their pleasures ; since, on the contrary, we have instances, too fresh in our memories, of their extravagance, and even profusion in that particular ; witness above a hundred and fifty thousand Pounds subscrib'd by them to *Italian* singers, and operas ; a sum, if rightly employ'd, sufficient to have fix'd the *British* muse in equal perfection and glory with those of *Greece* and *Rome*. The reason therefore must be, that we have never had so true a taste of the sublime and divine art of Poetry, as to find from it that transporting pleasure which has always ravish'd the finer spirits of those few nations where it has ever eminently flourish'd ; for if they found this delight, or even a satisfaction equal to that which they receive from the entertainment of mere sound, they would be as forward in its encouragement.

Here seem two objections to occur which may not be wholly unworthy to be answer'd. The first is, that it is the defect of the poets, or of those who assume that name, in not being able to give in their performances that pleasure, which only has produc'd *Patrons* in *Greece* and *Rome*, and can only challenge them any where else; for where the poets give us nothing that is in it self admirable, it is no wonder that they fail of *Patrons*, which nothing but admiration can or ought to obtain for them.

The second objection carries a double face, and that is, that one species of poetry, at least, has found extraordinary encouragement of late years; I mean the *Drama*: And yet all this encouragement has not been able to produce one play equal to almost the worst our *Theatre* gave us when the poets had not the twentieth part of the benefit of their labours that some of the meanest scribblers of this time have met with; which seems to prove, either that encouragement is not the nourishment of poetry, or that the *Dramatick* genius of this nation is quite extinguish'd.

To the first of these objections I make this reply: I do confess that in the prodigious number of poems produc'd by the versifiers of this nation, there are extremely few that contain any thing valuable, admirable, or capable of giving that transporting pleasure which is to be found in poetry that deserves that name. But then on the other side, it is certain, that we have had poets who, notwithstanding their faults, have had unquestionable merit, merit that always has obtain'd, and always will challenge the applause of men of taste; and yet those authors have not found any tolerable encouragement from our great men: wit-
ness,

ness, *Spencer* in one kind, *Butler* in another, *Orway* in a third, and *Dryden* in many kinds. *Spencer* and *Butler* starv'd, *Orway* dy'd in great want, as *Dryden* must have done, had not his works borne a considerable price with the bookseller; tho' even in that he has fallen short of some trifling authors since his time.

From hence it is plain, our great men have not wanted objects worthy of their encouragement in poetry, but a fine taste and understanding to relish the performances of those worthy objects, and to distinguish them from the miserable scribble of the wretched pushing versifiers of the times: And it is remarkable, and will appear from my answer to the following objection, that even those encouragements which have been given to something which has been call'd poetry, have been bestow'd upon the most abandon'd pieces that the poetasters of any nation have ever produc'd.

The next objection is, that we have had extraordinary encouragement for *Dramatick Poetry*, and that much greater than ever had been known before in this nation, which however has not been able to produce any valuable performance in that way; and several authors have made from three and four hundred pounds to fifteen hundred for one *Tragedy* or *Comedy*; which however never reach'd a second season. Whereas *Orway*, *Lee*, and *Dryden* could never attain more for one piece than one hundred pounds.

I believe by a fair computation, that *Mithridates*, *Theodosius*, *Alexander the great*, and *Hannibal*, have gain'd the several actors that have succeeded each other not less than fifty thousand pounds, and yet the author scarce got one hundred pounds a piece for his labour,

and dy'd at last in the very street; whereas if our *English* great men, who had power to have done it, had fix'd and order'd that the Poet should have receiv'd a reasonable share of the profits of his plays as long as they were acted in his time, as it is in *France*, he had had a comfortable maintainance from his own labours, and escap'd that miserable fate that befel him.

Thus *Orway* had but a hundred pounds apiece for his *Orphan* and *Venice Preserv'd*, tho' the players, reckoning down to this time, have not got less than twenty thousand pounds by them. The same may be said of *Mr. Dryden's Spanish Frier*.

'Tis true, that after the restoration, when the two houses struggled for the favour of the town, the taking poets were secur'd to either house by a sort of retaining fee, which seldom or never amounted to more than forty shillings a week; nor was that of any long continuance; however, that was some help to the support of a poet, during the time of his writing for the stage.

But now they would persuade us the case is much alter'd for the better in the poets behalf, and an author at this time shall get more by one scurvy performance, than *Lee*, *Orway*, and *Dryden*, by all theirs; tho' some of theirs will last in reputation as long as our language is understood, whereas in a month's time these expire in contempt.

This may therefore seem to make good the objection, that encouragement is not the thing that nourishes and makes poetry flourish, or else that our dramattick genius is quite extinct. But to a man that will consider justly of things, it will appear, that this which they
call

call encouragement, is, in reality, the greatest discouragement that ever beset the stage ; for when bad Poets find the highest favour, and the greatest reward, in its consequence it imposes silence upon men of merit in the art, who, unless they can take the same slavish methods to success which the poetasters pursue, they are sure to have their works slighted, if not entirely condemn'd ; for the players, who are by no means great judges of the perfection of a poem, often reject, and generally very supinely perform the best piece of the greatest master, who does not industriously pre-engage the leading men and women of quality in his cause ; so that tho' some particular persons have reap'd extravagant benefits from the most trifling comick, or ridiculous tragick entertainment, yet this injudicious profusion to worthless pretenders has, or must soon destroy all true *comedy* and *tragedy*, and at last sink the diversion of the *stage* itself, and would certainly have done it by this time, had it not been supported by old *plays* written under all those disadvantages.

Thus, I think, I have sufficiently answered the two objections that I brought.

From what I have said, I persuade myself, that it will be allow'd to be pretty evident, not only that the present low state of Poetry is owing to the want of taste and judgment of the general readers and hearers of poetic performances, more than to the real want of genius, but that also the defects and faults of former authors, whose beauties will always challenge our admiration, would have been more few and less gross, if they had written to so nice and judicious a people as the *Grecians*; for to the

perfection of Poetry, and its esteem in the world, not only a great genius and judgment is absolutely necessary in the Poet, but a fine taste and judgment also in the people, which yet never appear'd in this nation, and at this time is worse than ever; the cause of this certainly is ignorance, which seems now to be almost universal.

The ground and cause of this ignorance is owing to that very faulty and defective education which has always prevail'd in this nation, which I shall more fully enquire into, as likewise into its remedies, after I have given you a quotation from *Madam Dacier* about the causes of the present corruption of the *French* taste, which some years ago was so remarkably excellent; for at this time there have appear'd in *France* some popular writers, who, by their ignorance of the antients, have introduc'd a very false taste among them. I shall give you what this learned lady says in the words of an ingenious friend of mine, who has translated what *Madam Dacier* deliver'd upon this head, and transmitted it to me.

“ *Monf. De la Motte* had made a *version* (as he
 “ call'd it) of *Homer's Iliad* in *French* verse; and ha-
 “ ving taken the liberty to retrench, add, and change
 “ what he pleas'd through the whole of his work, he
 “ defends this conduct of his in a large discourse pre-
 “ fix'd to his Poem.

“ *Madam Dacier*, who had made, a little before,
 “ a version of *Homer* in prose, and given herself the
 “ trouble to follow her author with the utmost ex-
 “ actness that was consistent with elegance, could
 “ with no patience bear to see poor *Homer* so strangely
 “ mangled, but undertakes the censure of *Monsieur*

De la

“ *De la Motte's* performance, in a book she intitles
 “ *The Causes of the Corruption of taste.*

“ By the by, she says, *De la Motte* understands
 “ not one word of *Greek*, yet is so just as to acknow-
 “ ledge he has a great many good qualities, and that
 “ she is sensible of the fine compliments he has made
 “ her on her translation. Then, page 14, she pro-
 “ ceeds thus.

“ But not to make this one of those works which
 “ are purely polemick, and which I hate; because
 “ they appear to me more proper to divert the read-
 “ er, than to instruct him; I shall endeavour to avoid
 “ that common road of dispute, and make a sort of
 “ *Treatise* that shall be an enquiry into *the Causes of*
 “ *the Corruption of taste.*

“ *Quintilian* or *Tacitus* (it is not known which) has
 “ made a treatise of *the causes of the corruption* of elo-
 “ quence, and 'tis a work very useful to such as consi-
 “ der it well; for there is to be found the same dis-
 “ pute which has reign'd for some time, concerning
 “ the ancients and the moderns, and where 'tis to be
 “ observ'd that the right side carries it.

“ But there seems to me something more to be
 “ done, to lay the ax to the root of the tree; and to
 “ discover to the bottom the source of the evil,
 “ which is to enquire into *the causes of the corruption of*
 “ *taste*; for these causes being known, we shall know
 “ at the same time what it is that has corrupted elo-
 “ quence, and almost all the other arts which depend
 “ on wit and imagination.

“ It will be very difficult to say how a good taste
 “ came to be form'd among the nations, which have
 “ been the most celebrated for their politeness and
 “ wit.

“ When

“ When I read the books of *Moses*, and the other
 “ sacred writers that liv’d before the age of *Homer*, I
 “ am not surpriz’d at that grand taste which reigns in
 “ their writings; they had the true God for their
 “ master, and we feel throughout that divine character,
 “ which no human production is able to attain to.

“ But when I read all that is related of the *Egypt-*
 “ *tians*; when I see *Geometry*, *Architecture*, *Painting*,
 “ *Sculpture*, *Astronomy* and *Divination* flourishing a-
 “ mong them, in a few ages after the deluge; when
 “ I see a people persuaded of the immortality of the
 “ soul, and the necessity of a religion; a people
 “ which had a theology both very mysterious and e-
 “ nigmatical, that built temples, and gave even
 “ *Greece* her worship and her Gods; in short, when
 “ I see the ancient monuments which remain down to
 “ us of this people, I can make no doubt, but that
 “ a good taste reign’d also in their writings, and I
 “ confess I am surpriz’d and know not from whence
 “ all this should happen.

“ If I pass from thence into *Greece*, my astonishment
 “ is still greater; for I behold a prodigy, I behold
 “ a poet 250 years after the war of *Troy*, and con-
 “ trary to the gradation, markt by nature to all the
 “ productions of the human mind, joining to the glo-
 “ ry of invention that of perfection, and giving us a
 “ sort of poem of which he had never seen a model,
 “ which he had not imitated from any, and which
 “ none since could imitate; a poem, which for the fa-
 “ ble, union, and composition of its parts, for the
 “ number, harmony, and nobleness of its diction,
 “ for the artful mixture of truth and falsehood, for
 “ the magnificence of ideas, sublimity of its views
 “ and

“ and fiction, has been always look’d on as the most
 “ finish’d work that ever came from the hand of man.
 “ How could *Homer* be exempt from that general
 “ law, which perhaps never suffer’d but this single
 “ exception?

“ This I can’t tell what to say to — *Homer*
 “ had travell’d much into *Egypt*, *Spain* and *Africa*;
 “ but all that he could improve himself by his tra-
 “ vels, could be no more than to enrich his mytholo-
 “ gical theology, and embellish some parts of his
 “ poem with some singular novelties, as I have said
 “ elsewhere — neither *Egypt*, *Spain* nor *Africk* had
 “ wherewithall to shew him any thing that could
 “ give him an idea of his two poems.

“ We are therefore necessarily brought back to this
 “ principle, that as men can know nothing, but either
 “ as they find it out of themselves, or learn it from
 “ others; there are nations so happily situated, and
 “ whom the sun looks on so favourably, that they
 “ are capable of imagining and inventing of them-
 “ selves, and arriving at perfection; and there are o-
 “ thers bury’d in so thick an air, that never could,
 “ without the help of imitation, extricate themselves
 “ from the rudeness and barbarity their birth plung’d
 “ them into; and such are all the western nations
 “ compar’d to those of the east. These last having
 “ much more vivacity, imagination and flower of wit,
 “ as is to be seen at this day among the people of
 “ *Greece*; for in spite of the hard captivity under
 “ which they have languish’d for so long a time (and
 “ what spirit can support and preserve it self under a
 “ captivity so barbarous and so long!) they cease
 “ not to discover still some rays of that wit and
 “ spirit

“ spirit which so greatly distinguish’d their ancestors.

“ What I have said of the western nations, and their arriving at perfection never but thro’ imitation, is justify’d by history alone.— Not to quit our own subject, we see in what manner Poetry was brought to perfection among the *Latins*, their first attempts were not master-pieces as in *Greece*. *Horace*, agreeing in this with *Titus Livius*, tells us, that they were a long time without any poetry at all, except any body would reckon for poetry the uninstruct’d verses of the *Salii* compos’d by *Numa*, and which in *Augustus’s* time were not understood by the *Salii* themselves; the verses forbidden by the law of the 12 tables, and some wretched songs that the ancient *Romans* caus’d to be sung at their meals in praise of great men. At length mirth and heat of wine in some of their feasts gave occasion to the rough draught of comedy, which at first was no more than a heap of rude, obscene, and reproachful language, which those honest peasants threw at one another.—To these rude verses succeeded a sort of poem more regulated, call’d *Satire*, which preserv’d a great deal of the coarse railleries and pleasantries of the first rough draught, and only retrench’d somewhat of the most odious obscenity—*Satire* continu’d in this state above 200 years, and the only reason *Horace* gives for it, is that the *Romans* began not till late and after the first punick war, that is, in the 514th year of *Rome*, and the first year of the 135th olympiad, to read the writings of the *Greeks*. ’Twas then that a new light darted out upon their minds, and there arose a *Livius*

Andro-

“ *Andronicus* and a *Nævius*, who publish’d pieces af-
 “ ter the manner of the *Greeks*, and translated from
 “ them. *Nævius* even writ in verse the history of
 “ his first punick war, in which he bore arms.
 “ The good taste which began after this first war,
 “ grew much more polish’d in the second, in pro-
 “ portion as these great originals were more study’d;
 “ and at last the *Latin poetry* receiv’d its entire per-
 “ fection from *Horace* and *Virgil* under the reign of
 “ *Augustus*, 200 years after *Livius Andronicus*. Thus
 “ did imitation compleat the formation of taste in
 “ the *Romans*, and therefore it is that *Horace* recom-
 “ mends with so much care to study night and day
 “ the writings of the *Greeks*, which were so useful.

“ After having given this slight sketch of the slow
 “ progress of the *Latins*, (tho’ by the acknowledgment
 “ even of *Horace* they had a spirit naturally great
 “ and sublime, nor did they want a tragick enthusi-
 “ asm, or were unprovided of boldness, and a happy
 “ boldness,) let us examine what has pass’d among our
 “ selves. We shall see that we lay much longer in
 “ our barbarity, because we took no care to become
 “ acquainted with those perfect models the *Latins* and
 “ *Greeks* had left us; but no sooner did we begin to
 “ study ’em, than that rudeness was seen to vanish
 “ by little and little, and the politeness and neatness
 “ of those originals at length to drive rusticity and
 “ poison out of our works. Indeed after the revival
 “ of learning, there arose all at once men of profound
 “ knowledge and an exquisite taste, who were all au-
 “ thors of immortal works, and pav’d the way for o-
 “ thers; our poetry, above all, chang’d its form and
 “ found.

“ One

“ One would have thought some God on a sudden
 “ had come down to clear up this chaos, dissipate
 “ this darkness, and create light. I shall not mention
 “ here by what steps our poetry arriv’d to the per-
 “ fection our poets have been capable of giving it.
 “ I leave that to those who shall write its histo-
 “ ry ——— ’Tis sufficient for me to have shown that
 “ imitation alone has introduc’d a good taste among
 “ us, and that by that means *tragedy, comedy, satire,*
 “ and the *fable*, have been carry’d to that height as
 “ to be able to dispute with those of the ancients.

“ We have not been so happy in the *Epick poem* ;
 “ all the attempts we have made never have come
 “ near the mark, and it does not appear that we
 “ have had the least idea of the rules and construc-
 “ tion of that poem, as I hope to demonstrate in an-
 “ other place.

“ When once a sure and often repeated experience
 “ has shown us what it is which forms taste, ’tis cer-
 “ tain the same experience will always show us what
 “ it is that corrupts and spoils it. We have seen af-
 “ ter a convincing manner, that studying the *Greeks*
 “ and *Latins* brought us out of that rudeness we were
 “ in ; and we are now going to see that the igno-
 “ rance and contempt of the same study is what
 “ plunges us into it again ; indeed no sooner were
 “ these excellent originals neglected, and those stu-
 “ dies which alone conduce to the understanding them,
 “ but shoals of wretched works overflow’d *Paris* and
 “ the whole kingdom. But ’tis of importance to see
 “ by what steps this good taste, which so much pains
 “ were taken to form, is relaps’d into its first barbari-
 “ ty ; and into which, if care be not taken, it will
 “ soon draw all other arts after it.

“ The

“ The author of the treatise of *the causes of the corruption of eloquence* says, there are three things which especially had contributed to the sinking it so low as it was in his time.

“ The *first*, a bad education.

“ The *second*, the ignorance of masters or teachers.

“ The *third*, the idleness and negligence of youth.

“ 1. *Bad education*—For a child, says he, is govern’d at first by a father or mother, that being either ignorant, or neglectful, leave him commonly in the hands of men or maid servants incapable of every thing serious, who have not the least idea of honesty and virtue, and who only entertain him with idle and impertinent stories—Nay oftentimes the licentiousness in which the parents live, is more pernicious to children, than the talk and example of the governors they are under; for fond and infatuated with plays and representations, they communicate to their children the same inclinations incompatible with the love of good. They hear nothing talk’d of in the family but plays and pleasures, so that their conversation turns only on those diversions their minds are full of. How can the severity of study, which always is attended with labour and pains, agree with a continual dissipation, which only relaxes and corrupts it?

“ 2. *Ignorance of masters*—’Twou’d move ones pity to see what *preceptors* are set over these poor children. There are not two in a hundred that are capable of that great employment, and to render them capable of it, they ought to be made to forget what they know, and be taught what they know not.

*

“ 3. *Idle-*

“ 3. *Idleness and negligence of the children themselves.*—

“ Accustom’d to amusements, and naturally inclin’d to
 “ leave trouble for pleasure, they fly all laborious ap-
 “ plication, and strive neither to understand authors,
 “ instruct themselves in antiquity, nor to inform
 “ themselves in the history of men, things, countries
 “ and times.

“ To these causes of the corruption of eloquence
 “ the same writer opposes what it was that carry’d it
 “ to the height and splendor it was 120 years before.
 “ He represents to us the labours of the ancient ora-
 “ tors, their continual meditations, and the noble ef-
 “ forts they made to qualify themselves.

“ *Cicero* learnt law from *Mutius*, philosophy from *Phi-*
 “ *lo* and *Diodorus*, one of which follow’d the senti-
 “ ments of *Zeno*, and the other those of the new *acade-*
 “ *my*; he ran thro’ *Achaia* and *Asia*, to inform him-
 “ self of all the sciences and arts; and I could wish
 “ he had added that he had also employ’d himself in
 “ the translating a great part of *Plato*, and many
 “ of the orations of *Demosthenes*.

“ I leave the reader to judge, if the complaints
 “ which this writer makes of his age, do not agree
 “ perfectly with ours; and if our present ignorance
 “ and laziness be any thing different from theirs,
 “ compar’d with the diligence and profound know-
 “ ledge of the ancients.

“ But we have still two things which are particu-
 “ lar to us, and which contribute as much as all the
 “ rest to the corruption of taste: One is those licen-
 “ tious representations which directly combat reli-
 “ gion and morality, and the poetry and musick of
 “ which being soft and effeminate, communicate all
 “ their

“ their poison to the soul, and relax all the nerves of
 “ the mind, in such a manner, that almost all our
 “ poetry at present bears the same character.

“ The other is, those insipid and frivolous works,
 “ which I spoke of in the preface to the *Iliad*; those
 “ false *Epic poems*; those senseless *romances*, that ignorance
 “ and love have produc’d, and which, metamorphosing
 “ the greatest heroes of antiquity into city beaux and
 “ fops, have so accusom’d our young fellows to these
 “ false characters, that they cannot bear the real he-
 “ roes, if they do not resemble these extravagant and
 “ whimsical personages.

“ These are the two nearest causes of the corrup-
 “ tion of taste; and the causes which have brought
 “ forth the *discourse* and *ilind* of *Monfieur de la Motte*, in
 “ which every thing favours of this false taste of *opera*
 “ and *romances*; as I shall prove in the sequel.

“ A sure sign that these are the two causes of our
 “ present bad poetry is, that the eloquence of the
 “ pulpit and bar has escap’d this contagious pesti-
 “ lence. To what a high degree of perfection has
 “ that of the pulpit been carry’d in our days! where
 “ is there in the ancients to be found greater vehemence,
 “ passion, strength; or elevation of genius,
 “ more lively and magnificent images, more noble
 “ figures, or a more majestick composition?

“ Then for that of the bar, not to mention the
 “ great men we have lost, and who have acquir’d
 “ an immortal glory for their eloquence, do we not
 “ see at this time some at the bar, whom *Athens* and
 “ *Rome* would have reckon’d amongst their greatest
 “ orators?

“ What do I mention our eloquence? even our
 “ poetry that has been uninfected with this conta-
 “ gion, is it not become the rival of the *Grecian* poe-
 “ try, in the hands of those great poets who did ho-
 “ nour to the last age?

“ From whence then comes this difference be-
 “ tween this poetry and this eloquence, and that of
 “ our present poetry? Comes it not singly from this
 “ cause, that our orators and great poets labour’d,
 “ reflected, and drew from the sources of what is
 “ good and beautiful, and, after the example of *Cicero*,
 “ gave themselves up to masters in all the arts and
 “ sciences, to be instructed by them? instead of which,
 “ the present poets have never seriously taken pains,
 “ never study’d any thing but what was more hurtful
 “ than beneficial, have made coffee-houses their clo-
 “ sets and their *Parnassus*, and having their heads full
 “ of *operas* and *romances*, abound with nothing but false
 “ ideas, and know not, to make use of *Horace*’s words,

Unde parentur opes; quid alat formęque poetam:

Quid deceat, quid non: quo virtus, quo ferat error.

“ And this is what fully proves the important
 “ truth I would lay down, that ’tis the knowledge
 “ and acquaintance contracted with the great per-
 “ sonages of antiquity, the *Greeks* and *Latins*, espe-
 “ cially the *Greeks*, which form and nourish a good
 “ taste; and ’tis the contempt of, and estrangement
 “ from them, which corrupts and destroys it; and I
 “ must own I don’t know what proofs in argument are,
 “ if this does not approach even to a demonstration.

Thus far the learned *Madam Dacier* upon the cau-
 ses of the corruption of taste, which is now creeping

in upon them, after the establishment of a good one, from the time of *Cardinal Richelieu*, and the fixing the royal academy of sciences, to the latter end of the writing of *Monfieur Boileau*, *Monfieur Racine*, and some others; for by the influence of those great men who compos'd the academy, a fine taste was not only found among the authors, who were generally perfectly acquainted with the antients, but was likewise spread widely among the people, as is plain from the regulation of their stage, which before the time of *Richelieu*, as *Corneille* himself confesses, was as wild, confus'd and irregular, as ours is; but when *L' Abbe Hedeline* had by that *Cardinal's* order made an *Essay* towards its reformation according to the rules of art, the poets began to recover that noble diversion of the *Theatre* from those barbarisms, which the ignorance of foregoing writers had involv'd it in, and to make it a rational entertainment; the people or audience at the same time discover'd such an aptitude to relish good sense and order, as gave sufficient proof of the general good taste of the *French* nation, since after they had seen the just productions of art, they would never endure the roving, wandering, inconsistent trifles, that had so greedily been swallow'd by their ancestors.

I think it requires no argument to prove the justness and fineness of *Madam Dacier's* observation, that a good taste in all countries but *Greece* was deriv'd from imitation, and from an imitation of the *Greek* poets and orators. It is however remarkable, that this good taste, which sprung from imitation in all the nations wherever a good taste prevail'd, was of a much shorter duration than in *Greece*, where it was the child of nature, and, as I may say, in its native clime; for in

all parts of *Greece* it flourish'd for at least a thousand or fifteen hundred years, that is, from before the time of *Homer* to that of *Longinus* ; but it was in perfection in *Rome* in oratory but a little before *Cicero*, and in poetry only in the time of *Augustus Caesar*, I mean, in that perfection in which it always appear'd in *Greece* ; not but that now and then there appear'd this good taste in some one particular poet down as far as *Claudian*, who seems in his *fables*, and even his diction and versification, not wholly without it. I omit *Heliodorus*, who liv'd much about the same time, because he was by nation a *Greek* : Perhaps some may add *Boetius*, a nobleman in the court of *Theodoric the Goth*. Be that as it will, soon after, barbarism, like an inundation, overflow'd all parts of *Europe*, and sunk not only a good taste, but indeed all manner of learning for several hundred years. Tho' in the time of *Boccace*, *Dante*, *Petrarch*, and some others, there was a sort of poetry reviv'd in *Italy*, which, as I have already observ'd, was deriv'd from the *Provencial* poets ; yet I may justly say, that these authors being entirely ignorant of the *Greeks*, and as negligent of the valuable *Romans*, there was nothing of a good taste among them.

Cosmo, and *Lorenzo di Medici* first open'd the way for the return of a good taste in all the politer arts, by drawing several of the *Grecians*, after the taking of *Constantinople* by the *Turks*, from *Greece* to *Florence*, and procuring many of the old *Greek* authors thence, by the favour of *Bajazet the Turkish Emperor*. These learned men of *Greece*, under the patronage of *Lorenzo di Medici*, and that of his grandfather *Cosmo*, began to teach the *Greek* language, which was then entirely

unknown in *Europe*, and to bring the *Italians* acquainted with *Aristotle*, *Homer*, and the other eminent poets and orators of the antient *Greek* nation, which took so much, by the patronage of *Lorenzo*, that *Politian* had resorting to his school, for instruction in the finer arts, five hundred young noblemen and gentlemen at a time. *Painting*, *sculpture*, and *architecture*, which were reviv'd a little before, came now likewise to a very great perfection, by the artists applying themselves to the study of the *antique* in their *statues* and *basso relievos*, as if none of the politer arts, and a grand gusto in them, could be obtain'd without a perfect acquaintance with the *Greeks*. This is at least certain, that there never was in any nation a great poet, painter, or statuary, who had not more or less knowledge of the *antique*; and the principal faults of that great and wonderful genius in painting, *Reubens*, are entirely owing to his too great neglect of the antients; but while *painting*, *statuary*, and *architecture* made so swift a progress to perfection in *Italy*, poetry lag'd after but lamely; however *Castelvetro*, *Picolhuomini* and others, endeavour'd to reform the taste of the *Italians*, by their notes upon *Aristotle's poetics*, long before we knew any thing of them on this side the *Alps*.

Father *Rapin*, and *Monfieur Hedeline*, and the royal academy's censure of the *Cid*, were the first who began to meddle with *Aristotle* in the *French* language, and gave rise to a good taste in *France*, to whom *Monfieur Bossu* succeeded, and perform'd to a miracle upon the *Epic poem*; and in our days *Monfieur Dacier* has exceeded all mankind upon *Horace's art of poetry*, and *Aristotle's poetics*. Thus was a good taste establish'd throughout *France*; but alas! as we find from *Ma-*

dam *Dacier's* quotation, it is likely not to be of a longer duration there than it was in *Rome*, the reasons of which she has sufficiently made out, all terminating in this, a bad education and ignorant writers.

I once thought that this evil might have been prevented in *France*, if all books in the politer arts had been entirely submitted to the censure of the academy, and none suffer'd to be printed but by their approbation. But when I found that strange, wild medley of rambling fancy, call'd *the Arabian nights entertainments*, written by a member of that society, I alter'd my opinion; since that very book discovers that the corruption of taste had infected a member of it, and who, without any apprehension of scandal to his understanding, has, by the publication of it, endeavour'd to spread the corruption among the people.

Before I come to *England*, I cannot omit declaring my opinion, tho' contrary to that of *Madam Dacier*, about *Homer*. She will needs have it, I know not on what grounds, that *Homer* had never seen any poem before his time, whence he could take the idea, or even a hint of his *Ilias* and *Odysses*; but that at once he invented it, and made it perfect, contrary to all the rules of gradation, by which arts are by degrees polish'd and brought to their height; I see no reason for this supposition, but only that we have no poem now extant in that kind, which is of greater antiquity than *Homer*. But in my opinion it is a very fallacious way of arguing, to pretend that because there is no such poem extant, that therefore there never was any such; since we have undoubted proof from history, that there have perish'd of the antient *Greek* valuable authors above a hundred thousand volumes in the library

brary of *Ptolomy Philadelphus*, and perhaps half as many more, before that library was establish'd, as well as after its destruction, till the general wreck of learning by the barbarous nations, which demolish'd almost all the monuments of antiquity.

Nay, if we may judge from the progress of other arts in *Greece* it self, that fine and polite people, however influenc'd and favour'd by the gracious aspect of the sun, and the happiness of their climate, brought nothing else to perfection at once, as is plain from their *painting, statuary, musick*, and even poetry it self; for it is evident from *tragedy*, tho' the idea of it was plainly taken from *Homer*, that the *Athenians* themselves could not bring it, at its first appearance, to that excellence with which *Sophocles* and *Euripides* adorn'd it; for the rude sketches which *Thespis* gave them of this excellent poem, remain'd some years among 'em, till *Æschylus* brought it to a more regular and rational form, and *Sophocles* and *Euripides*, and the other *Tragic poets* of that time, gave it a finishing stroke. I cannot therefore imagin that the *Epic poem*, so much more difficult in its nature, should be invented and perfected by the same hand.

But to return from this short digression, I shall pass from the present corruption of the *French* taste, complain'd of by this learned lady, to the consideration of that very bad taste, which has always reign'd in most of the readers and writers of our nation, and that almost in every part of poetry, the chief cause of which I have already assign'd ignorance to be, and this ignorance has always been deriv'd from our very faulty education, which, I believe I may venture to assert, is the most defective of any in this part of *Eu-*

rope: The education of youth in general is in *England* made a trade, and a trade that labours under greater disadvantages than any of the most mechanick; for in all these, at least in regular corporations, none is permitted to set up without having serv'd his time to the same business, and may reasonably be suppos'd therefore to be master of it, and understand it perfectly; but every little smatterer in *Latin*, that can but just construe a common classic, is permitted to undertake the instruction of youth, and make them waste seven, eight, nine, or ten years, to make but a very indifferent progress in the knowledge of *Greek* and *Latin*, in which, in other countries, the mastery is obtain'd in four years at most, by the advantage of skilful masters and a happy method.

There is nothing more different than the beauties and perfections of the prosaic and poetic diction; and therefore in other countries no student is permitted to read a poet, till he is master of the prosaic beauties and perfections, and has fix'd his stile according to the standard of *Cicero*, not omitting at the same time the being perfect in the excellence of the historic manner, by a familiarity with *Salust* in the first place, or chiefly, *Tacitus*, and the rest of the *Roman Historians*. The same may be said of the *Greek*, where the student is first brought acquainted with *Plutarch*, *Lucian*, *Herodotus*, *Thucydides*, *Arrian*, *Plato*, *Demosthenes*, and other prosaic authors in that language, from whence they proceed to *Hesiod*, *Theocritus*, the minor poets, and lastly to *Homer*; in *Latin*, they begin with *Claudian*, some books of *Statius*, and *Lucan*, *Ovid*, *Tibullus*, *Catullus* and *Propertius*, and conclude with *Horace* and *Virgil*. On the contrary, in *England*, a boy that cannot

not turn a common sentence into *Latin*, is put to read and study the most difficult *Latin poets*, even to *Horace* and *Virgil* themselves; and so to *Homer* in the *Greek*, before they know any thing at all of *Cicero*, *Demosthenes*, or any of the other prose authors which I have mentioned in either language, and by consequence can have no taste or judgment in the propriety and elegance of stile, if ever they come to be able to write any tolerable *Latin* or *Greek*, to which not one in ten thousand, who wastes so much time in the common schools, ever arrives. But were not this evil so great, and if we should suppose that even by this faulty method some of them should become masters of the *Latin* and *Greek* diction; yet it is a melancholy consideration, that they are oblig'd to spend so many years only to attain the knowledge of two dead languages, without the least improvement in any art or science. 'Tis true, they have what they call a prosodia and a rhetorick in the *English* schools; but these two cannot let them far into the knowledge either of poetry or rhetorick; for the prosodia only teaches them the quantities, or the difference of long and short syllables, and how to frame several sorts of verses in the *Greek* and *Latin* tongue, without giving them the least insight into the art of poetry it self, and therefore only qualifies them for meer versifiers.

Thus in *rhetorick*, all the *rhetoricks* that ever I saw, for the *English* schools teach only the tropes and figures of words and sentences, which regard nothing of *rhetorick* but the meer diction, they take little or no notice of the forming an oration in general, of its several parts, and their beauties and excellence; as to the *exordium* or opening the subject, the *narration* or state
of

of the question, the confutation, confirmation, amplification, peroration, or conclusion of the whole; nor do they take care to let the young student into those necessary rules of invention, which are absolutely requir'd to find out all the argument which every subject can afford, to the full proof and evidence of its excellence in the three kinds which are establish'd of all *rhetorical* discourses, whether it be of praise or dispraise, persuasion or dissuasion, accusation or defence.

I know there are some men for rejecting all these rules of art, and leaving all to the genius and fancy of the speaker; but these are men who are not only ignorant of the art, but even of the reason of things; and I am strangely surpriz'd to find the messieurs of *Port-royal* guilty of so gross an absurdity, as the rejecting particularly the rules of invention of arguments establish'd by the ancients. Their reason for it is so very superficial and weak, that I am almost asham'd to quote it, nor should I do it, had it not come from men of such reputation for learning and fine sense. "Can we suppose, say they, that *Virgil* (for these rules of invention are necessary in poetry as well as rhetorick) ask'd the several questions of *Cur, quomodo, quando, &c.* before he set himself to write?" Supposing he did not, what is the consequence of that? is that any proof that he did not study and learn this method, and practise it too, till by long use he saw at first sight whatever his subject would afford? By the same way of reasoning, they might have excluded *Virgil* from having study'd *Grammar*, and ask'd the question, whether, when he set himself down to write, he did not examine which was the nominative *Case* and the *Verb*, and the other rules of *Concordance*? I should easily an-

swer

swer no, because use had render'd all those things so familiar to him, that he could not possibly transgress in them. But as this is no proof that he never study'd *Grammar*, or that *Grammar* was not necessary to his study, so likewise it cannot in the least justify the messieurs of *Port-royal* in their opinion that he made no use of the rules of *rhétorick* which relate to the invention, or that those rules are not necessary now to be studied; since, if we may think the authority of *Cicero* of any force, the contrary is evident; for he was not a meer pedant, but the most consummate orator that ever appear'd in the world, and yet he thought these rules so necessary for a young student in oratory, that in those books which he has left us upon that art, where he treats of invention, he has amply deliver'd them.

This may seem perhaps a sort of a digression to some, yet it is by no means so, since it farther makes out the defects of our schools in the neglect of all the useful rules of *rhétorick* as well as poetry, which might have establish'd among us, had they been taught, long before this time, a good taste of oratory and poetry, and the precious time of our youth had not been confin'd to the slavish study of words only, but have been inform'd in things, and arts, as well as expressions. But as it is now, knowing nothing thro' all the tedious years of their application to books, but the diction, they imagin that there is no other perfection either in oratory or poetry, and by consequence they can never have a good taste, for they are still ignorant of that which only can create it in them, which nothing but the knowledge of art can do, for that knowledge is what we call a good taste, or at least the foundation of it. Per-

Perhaps it may be said, that we cannot with *Madam Dacier* complain that the ancients are not read among us, since *Homer*, *Virgil*, *Horace*, and the rest are taught almost in every vulgar school. But how are they taught? not as poets, for their masters understand them not as such, or know any thing of their poetical excellence, but give their lessons from them only as examples to be servilely imitated in the diction or mode of expression alone.

But still to render their education more faulty, their masters pick out such authors to inculcate chiefly to their students, which must fix an ill taste in them. Thus *Martial* is the darling of our common schools, and what is yet worse, *Owen's epigrams* are, if not taught, particularly recommended or read, whose trifling points, and worthless jingle, insinuate themselves so far into the injudicious fancy of boys, that they can scarce ever afterwards relish any thing truly valuable.

I have not touch'd upon our university education, because I should have been forc'd, in deference to truth, to have shown, that this evil is not remov'd by those additional years of study, which our youths spend in those places; at least it is evident, that those who have made the greatest figure among them in the politer arts, have, in their writings publish'd to the world, bounded their aim and ambition with the beauties of expression alone, giving us no manner of proof that they had the least notion of any thing else, and many of these gentlemen have by their writings contributed, more than any thing else, to the confirming the ill taste of the town.

I might say much more upon this head; but this seems sufficient to prove our ignorance of art,

art, the only source of an ill taste, as well as its causes.

The only remedy that I know of, (for to reform our education seems an impossible undertaking) is the publication of books of criticism, which may, at least in time, touch the minds of men of the finer sense and reason, and bring them over to the side of art and science, whose influence by degrees would bring in all the young *wou'd-be-wits*, and so the general readers and hearers of poetry.

It was very late before criticism came into *England*. After that little Sir *Philip Sidney* has said of it in his apology for poetry, *Ben Johnson* made the earliest steps towards it, not only in his discoveries, but in his translation of *Horace's art of poetry*. After him I know not of any thing 'till since the restoration, and then the first attempts that way were very faulty, that is, in some of the prefaces, and the *Essay on dramatic poetry* of Mr. *Dryden's*, in which however there is scarce one just criticism in ten. The first discourse, that I remember, of true value and excellence in this nature, was the present *Essay* under our consideration, which was follow'd by my Lord *Roscommon's Essay on translated verse*. Mr. *Rymer*, in his translation of *Rapin's* reflections upon *Aristotle*, and his criticisms upon the tragedies of the last age; Mr. *Dennis's* several learned discourses upon this art, and some few others, as the translation of *Aristotle's poetics*, with *Dacier's* notes, &c. have laid down principles enough to reform the taste of every considering man, that will read them with any application.

But this must be said of my Lord *Duke's Essay on poetry*, that as it was the first criticism that appear'd in our tongue,

tongue, at a time when the taste of the town was in a most abandon'd condition, so it is alone sufficient to inspire a true knowledge and judgment of the art, and by consequence of giving us a good taste; and it is the more capable of doing this, because the instructions are convey'd in an easy manner, with abundance of good sense and reason, in harmonious verse, which methinks should have fix'd it, before this time, in the minds even of the ladies, so far as to make them despise that wretched stuff, which they have of late years so visibly encourag'd. But the reason it has not had this effect upon them, and some others, I conclude is, because they have not read it; which that they may, is one of the chief reasons of my reviving it now in this manner, and offering it to their hands, with my imperfect *commentaries*, to show, as well as I can, not only my value for it, but its real merit, and how worthy it is of their serious perusal, and how loudly it challenges all their attention and application to fix it in their understanding and memory.

I shall therefore now proceed to the *Essay* it self.

Number, and rhyme, and that harmonious sound,
Which never does the ear with harshness wound,
Are necessary, yet but vulgar arts;
For all in vain these superficial parts
Contribute to the structure of the whole,
Without a genius too, for that's the soul.

Before I proceed to a consideration of the particular and judicious instruction of these lines, it seems incumbent

cumbent upon me to remove an objection rais'd by the ignorant against the three first lines, as if the noble author were guilty of a sort of tautology, when he mentions,

*Number and — that harmonious sound,
That never does the ear with harshness wound.*

As two distinct qualities or perfections, of which the poet is oblig'd to be master; whereas, say they, *Number includes*

*Harmonious sound,
That never does the ear with harshness wound.*

And therefore the latter cannot be a distinct precept.

But if the gentlemen, who make this objection, had been acquainted with the true force of the *Rhythmus*, or fluency of *numbers*, in that necessary apposition of different numbers, and those which ought to proceed and follow each other, in order to produce a perfect harmonious variety, they would have found, that tho' a poet may be free from false quantities or numbers, he may yet fall short of that *harmonious sound*, which never wounds the ear with harshness or satiety; for example, a verse composed of five *Iambics*, or five long and five short syllables, has number, or true quantity, but yet may be often harsh, and must want, by the uniformity of *cadence*, that variety that produces the harmony which our author requires; and therefore *Dryden* and *Milton*, the greatest masters of *English versification*, have frequently given us two or three short quantities together, to attain this agreeable end.

This

This I have shewn of Mr. *Dryden*, in my complete art of poetry, to which I refer the reader; the same may be found likewise in *Milton* by any nice and judicious reader.

It was a perfect skill in this particular, which gave *Virgil* that singular harmony of versification above all the other *Latin* poets, in so eminent a degree, that it may be distinguish'd even by some that do not understand *Latin*; as we have an instance in *France*, of a certain gentleman of figure, whose name I have forgot, who, at the hearing of certain verses of *Virgil* repeated in company with those of several other poets, would never fail to point out the verses of *Virgil* from all the rest.

ISAAC VOSSIUS, a man of great politeness, as well as learning, has given us a small treatise in the *Latin* tongue, entitl'd, *De poematum cantu & viribus rhythmi*, in which he has fully discours'd of the numbers or quantities of the *Latin* verse, and their proper and just apposition, to gain that force and harmony which is necessary to perfection in this particular. But as what we have said is chiefly, if not wholly proper to the *Roman* tongue, I shall say no more of it, but insist that there is, even in our language, something that bears a proportion to it, and which is sufficient to justify my noble author in the distinction he makes between number, and

*That harmonious sound,
That never does the ear with harshness wound.*

A third thing in these verses of the *Essay*, and which it seems to make a necessary part of poetry, is the

the *rhime*. Tho' I cannot agree with the *Essay*, that *rhime* is a necessary part of poetry; yet this may be said in the author's excuse, that it was establish'd as such, at the time when this *Essay* was written, nothing having then appear'd in blank verse (as they call it) but *Milton's Paradise lost*, and that known then but to a few, and esteem'd by some of them defective in that particular, which made *Dryden* write his *State of innocence* in rhime, thinking *Milton's* thoughts and images imperfect without that jingle; nay, *Dryden* was so fond of rhime, that he brought it upon the stage, and establish'd it so far by his success, that he ventur'd in one of his prefaces to say, that it had now so strong a possession of the stage, that he durst prophesy no play would take without it; and yet he saw in less than a year's time, that scarce any play would be receiv'd with it. This change was caus'd not only by the *Rehearsal*, but also by several admirable reflections in this *Essay*, which we shall hereafter take notice of.

After *Milton* had prevail'd in the world, the fautors of jingle gave up the greater poetry, at least the *epic* and *tragic* poems, to blank verse, that is, to verse without rhime, to number and harmony of sound, in which rhime had really no share, and to which not the least just claim. But then they yet insist that it is necessary in all the shorter poems, but with no greater ground in truth than in the former; for wherever there is force and genius express'd in numbers and harmony, we shall find there is not the least occasion for rhime. I shall give but one instance among many, and that is in Mr. *Dennis* from *Habbakuk*, which I transcribe from his admirable *Grounds of Criticism in poetry*.

F

When

*When the almighty from mount Paran came,
 The brightness of his glory, with its blaze,
 Expanding, fill'd the vast abyss of heaven,
 And the whole earth resounded with his praise.
 The burning pestilence before him march'd,
 And from his feet a fiery whirlwind flew.
 He stood and measur'd the extended earth,
 Scattering the trembling nations with a look,
 At which the everlasting mountains fled,
 And, shaking, the perpetual hills did bow.
 Against the floods was thy fierce anger then,
 Against the sea the burning of thy wrath,
 That thou didst thro' it, with thy flaming steeds,
 And with thy chariots of salvation, drive.
 The rocks their summits beetled o'er their base,
 To view the terrors of thy wondrous march;
 Then, shivering, shrank from the amazing sight :
 The floods divided, show'd a fearful chasm ;
 And as thy sounding horses, all on fire,
 Thro' heaps of congregated waters flew,
 The deep his roaring voice at all his mouths
 Utter'd, and lifted all his arms on high.*

If the rhimesters will still say that even this had been better with rhyme, I will endeavour to convince 'em, by putting down the same passage of *Habbakuk* in rhyme by another hand, and that no contemptible one, that is, by the famous, ingenious, and justly admir'd Mrs. Singer.

I. *When*

I.

*When God from Teman came,
 And, cloath'd in glory, from mount Paran shone,
 Drest in the unsufferable Flame,
 That hides his dazzling throne,
 His glory soon eclips'd the once bright Titan's rays,
 And fill'd the trembling earth with terror and amaze;
 Resplendent beams did crown his awful head,
 And shining brightness all around him spread.
 Omnipotence he graspt in his strong hand,
 And listning death stood waiting on his dread command;
 Waiting 'till his resistless bolts he'd throw;
 Devouring coals beneath his feet did glow;
 All nature's frame did quake beneath his feet,
 And with his hand he the vast globe did mete.
 The frightened nations scattered,
 And at his sight the bashful mountains fled;
 The everlasting hills their founder's voice obey,
 And stoop their lofty heads to make th' Eternal way.
 The distant Ethiops all confusion are,
 And Midian's trembling curtains cannot hide their fear;
 When thy fierce chariots pass'd the yielding sea,
 The blushing waves back in amazement flee;
 Affrighted Jordan stops his flowing urn,
 And bids his forward streams back to their fountain turn.*

II.

*Arm'd with thy mighty bow,
 Thou march'dst against thy daring foe,
 And very terrible thou didst appear
 To them, but thus thy darling people cheer:*

oblig'd to stretch what she has given us into a paraphrase for the sake of the rhyme, and that if it had not been for this consideration, her poem had been more compleat, and more harmonious.

What I have here said shows, that a *genius* with number and harmony has no manner of need of rhyme, nay, that rhyme is injurious to 'em, even in the shorter poems, and proves, that therefore our writers might leave it off with success, as many of the *Italians* had done before the time of *Milton*, as that great Poet assures us. It is certain that rhyme has been the cause of many considerable errors of some of the best of our Poets, not only in cramping their sense, but often in spoiling their *diction*. Instances of the former I shall not here give, since they would be too long, and perhaps tedious in this place, and I shall be satisfy'd with giving only two of the latter; the first from *Waller*, the second from *Dryden*; and I pitch upon these two Poets, because they were both eminent for the copiousness of their stile, and a thorough command of the *English* tongue; for since the servitude of rhyme has thrown two such great men upon defects which they would have otherwise escap'd, what must it do with others who want their great qualities? First as to *Waller*, in these verses:

*Poets lose half the praise they shou'd have got,
Could it be seen what they discreetly blot.*

This couplet is not *Grammar*; and if Mr. *Waller* had been to express himself out of rhyme, he would have said, *Poets lose half the praise that we should give them,*

them, if we could see what they blot out with judgment. And thus Dryden in his *Aurengezeb* :

Yet her alone let not your thunder seize,
I too deserve to die, because I please.

I have elsewhere observ'd, that Mr. Dryden would not have made use of so calm a word as *seize*, had it not been for the rhyme ; seizing might do well enough for a bum bailiff, but never can come up to the terrible blow of a thunderbolt ; they are originally the words of *Hippolitus* in *Seneca*, but far short in the mouth of *Aurengezeb*, which was all entirely the effect of rhyme, since Mr. Dryden very seldom otherwise fell short of the author from whom he thought fit to borrow.

That I am not singular in this opinion, I shall prove from the following words of my Lord Roscommon, in his *Essay upon translated verse*.

Of many faults rhyme is (perhaps) the cause,
Too strict to rhyme we slight more useful laws ;
For that in Greece, or Rome, was never known,
Till by barbarian deluges o'reflown ;
Subdu'd, undone, they did at last obey,
And change their own for their invaders way.

I grant, that from the mossy idol oak,
In double rhimes, our Thor and Woden spoke ;
And by succession of unlearned times,
As bards began, so monks rung on the chimes.

But now that Phœbus, and the sacred nine,
With all their beams on our blest island shine ;

Why

*Why should not we their ancient rites restore,
 And be what Rome, or Athens, were before ?
 O may I live to see that glorious day,
 And sing loud Pæans through the crowded way ;
 When in triumphant state the british muse,
 True to herself, shall barbarous aid refuse,
 And in that Roman majesty appear,
 Which none know better, and none come so near.*

I think it is of no great consequence whence this jingle of rhyme is deriv'd, that is, whether it came from the old *Runic Poetry*, as Sir *William Temple* contends; or from the *Arabians*, by the way of *Spain*, and so thro' *Provence* to *Italy*, and from thence thro' the rest of *Europe*, as some others would have it. Nor, in my opinion, does rhyme gain any true value from having been in use among the *Hebrews* themselves, as the curious and learned *Monfieur le Clerk*, in his learned commentaries upon several parts of the *Old Testament*, seems to conjecture, for he is not positive in that particular, since we have seen, by what we have said, that it is defective in its own nature, and the cause of unavoidable defects in the Poet. But to return to the *Essay*.

*Number and rhyme, and that harmonious sound,
 That never does the ear with harshness wound,
 Are necessary, yet but vulgar arts ;
 For all in vain these superficial parts
 Contribute to the structure of the whole,
 Without a genius too, for that's the soul.*

There is nothing more judicious than what is here deliver'd by the *Essay*, viz. that *number* and *rhime* are but *vulgar arts*, mean and low accomplishments, and mere superficial parts, that have no share in the essence of poetry ; since that consists in imitation, and imitation is not to be obtain'd, in any sovereign degree, without a great genius, but may subsist, and in great perfection too, without verse, and much more without rhime ; the harmony of numbers are added to poetry, not as essential to that art, but as agreeable ornaments to recommend it. This is *Aristotle's* opinion, which he founds upon this reason, that if any one should turn *Herodotus* into verse, it would notwithstanding still be a history ; and on the other side, if any one should put the *iliads* of *Homer* into prose, it would however effectually remain a poem. But unknowing of this admirable precept of the *Essay*, most, if not all of our taking and popular versifiers, have suppos'd that the chief excellence of poetry lies in *number* and *rhime*, in a flowing smoothness of verse, which is now very common, and a sort of quaintness of expression ; and this ignorance and folly has spread so far, and is so grounded in the *many*, that we have seen the whole *art of poetry*, of *English poetry* (for so they are pleas'd to distinguish it) is confin'd to these alone in a book too scandalously mean to name, which, by the arts of the *booksellers* concern'd, has spread, by many editions, thro' all *England*, and corrupted, or at least continu'd the corruption of the young readers and lovers of poetry. But as that has no ground in reason and truth ; so this valuable *Maxim* of the *Essay* is founded on both, and confirm'd by the judgment of the learned and knowing of all nations and ages.

Without a genius too, for that's the soul.
 A spirit which inspires the work throughout,
 As that of nature moves the world about ;
 A heat which glows in every word that's writ :
 'Tis something of divine, and more than wit ;
 It self unseen, yet all things by it shown,
 Describing all men, but describ'd by none.

As it is sufficiently evident from what has been said, that the *Essay* is perfectly in the right, and has judiciously determin'd, that number and rhyme are but superficial parts of poetry, and contribute very little to the structure of a poem, where there is not a genius to support them, and render them really valuable, so I believe that this assertion, which makes the *genius* the soul of the work, is too self-evident to need any confirmation: It is certainly granted on all sides ; for whilst there have been hot disputes whether *art*, or *nature*, contributed most to the forming of a *poet*, nobody ever yet contended that there could be a poet without a *genius* ; *Horace* indeed having fix'd this maxim, adds, that he can't see what use, or benefit, a rude, uncultivated *genius*, can be of, and by consequence that judgment, or art, is absolutely necessary for the rendering a *genius* truly valuable ; but these conditions of art, or judgment, which *Horace* requires to be added to a *genius*, do by no means lessen the truth of what the *Essay* affirms, when he tells us that a *genius* is the *soul*.

A spi-

*A spirit which inspires the work throughout,
As that of nature moves the world about.*

It may perhaps be thought proper in this place that I should define a term which is of that visible importance, since there is no greater obstruction to the clear and adequate knowledge of things, than the leaving the terms we make use of to a vague and undetermin'd sense. It is no difficult matter to define a simple *idea*, or the term which expresses that simple *idea*; but when there is a term that stands for an *idea* that is extremely complex, or compounded of great variety of parts, it is not so easy a matter to give a perfect and adequate definition of it. Of this nature are these two terms, *wit* and *genius*; and this is the reason that the former has never yet been so compleatly defin'd, as to give full satisfaction that the definition was perfectly just; for the general term *wit* stands for so many things so very different in their nature, that they seem by no means capable of being reduc'd to one and the same individual definition: For example, what the *Latins* express by the word *ingenium*, we do by the term *wit*; what they mean by their metaphorical *sal*, by *acumen*, *lepos*, and some other words, we still express by that of *wit*. The beauties of *Homer*, *Pindar*, *Sophocles*, *Euripides*, *Anacreon*, *Aristophanes*, *Menander*, *Virgil*, *Horace*, *Ovid*, *Terence*, and even down to the points of *Martial*, the burlesk of *Scarron* and *Butler*, the biting of *Satire*, and the mirth of our comic poets, and various other things, both serious and gay, we range under this general term *wit*; nay, even *genius* it self is often express'd

press'd by *wit* ; it is therefore no wonder that we never have had a true and just definition of *wit*, that is, a definition that expresses all its parts and qualities ; and I believe I may venture to prophesy that we never shall have any such definition.

What has been said of the term *wit*, will in great part hold good of that of *genius* ; which consideration, join'd with what is offer'd in the *Essay*, will, I dare persuade my self, sufficiently excuse me from pretending to define it ; however, omitting the fine speculations that are to be found upon this head, as being above the capacity of the general readers, to whom I chuse to speak, I shall venture to say a word or two about a *genius*.

I think it is pretty plain that the *Latins* express'd what we call *genius* by the word *ingenium*, as it is evident *Horace* does in his *Art of Poetry* ; and if I do not mistake the matter, that word is not embarrass'd with so many doubts, and so great an obscurity as our word *genius* ; which, tho' I shall not here pretend to define, yet, as far as it relates to poetry, I shall venture to mention some particulars which compose it ; as, a strong and clear imagination, or fancy, by which the poet is furnish'd with the lively images of all things, and enabled by them to form that imitation, which is the life and soul of poetry ; for without imitation, there neither is, nor can be, any valuable poetry. There is, besides this, requir'd to a poetic *genius* certain warmth and vigour, which by some is call'd enthusiasm, and which gives that force and transport to the images that are found in a great *Poet*, and proves what the *Essay* says, that a *genius* is the soul of poetry.

*A spirit which inspires the work throughout,
 As that of nature moves the world about ;
 A heat which glows in every word that's writ ;
 'Tis something of divine, and more than wit ;
 It self unseen, yet all things by it shown,
 Describing all men, but describ'd by none.*

Without this warmth, verses are but insipid, and
 even the images, tolerably drawn, flat and untouching.
Ovid makes this warmth a sort of a god.

Est Deus in nobis, agitante calescimus ipso.

We have a God within us, whose motions and agitations make us grow warm ; and indeed, if the poet feels not this warmth himself when he writes, he can never give it to his reader ; its approaches and recesses are so little in the poet's power, that he cannot command them when he pleases, which perfectly agrees with our notion of inspiration, sent to us by the will, and at the time of some superior agent, that acts upon our mind, when, as long, and as short a time as he thinks fit. But this is more admirably express'd in the *Essay* than my words can render it.

Where dost thou dwell ? what caverns of the
 [brain

Can such a vast and mighty thing contain ?

When I at idle hours in vain thy absence mourn,
 O where dost thou retire ? and why dost thou

[return,
 Some-

Sometimes with powerful charms to hurry me
 [away
 From pleasures of the night, and business of the
 [day ?
 Ev'n now, too far transported, I am fain
 To check thy course, and use the needful rein.

The noble author having fix'd the necessity of a *genius* in poetry, proceeds to show that there is an equal necessity that this very *genius*, to make it truly valuable, should be govern'd and regulated by judgment.

As all is dullness when the fancy's bad ;
 So, without judgment, fancy is but mad :
 And judgment has a boundless influence,
 Not only in the choice of words, or sense,
 But on the world, on manners, and on men ;
 Fancy is but the feather of the pen ;
 Reason is that substantial, useful part,
 Which gains the head, while t'other wins the
 [heart.

The doctrine of these verses is not only extremely judicious, but of the greatest importance to the perfection of poetry, especially in this nation, where a flash of the wildest fancy in nature generally goes
 downa

down for most excellent poetry ; as if reason were by right excluded from all the productions of the *Muses*, and we, like *Democritus*, had unanimously agreed, that none should be poets but madmen. How that philosopher came to entertain such a notion, is not worth while to enquire, since all the great poets of his nation are as eminent for their judgment, as for their *genius*, or *fancy*; for those two words signify the same thing, and he could not by their practice imagine, but that the highest operations of reason were absolutely necessary for the forming a compleat poem. But in *England* indeed, where we have very few perfect poems, and where ignorance is the dispenser of applause, and where the wildest gambols of fancy often meet with the greatest success, such a mad notion might easily prevail, into which, not only the vulgar, but men of fine parts in other things, have evidently fallen, as particularly Sir *William Temple*, in his *Essay on Poetry*, where, tho' he has more than once made specious and pompous expressions of judgment in this art, he at last throws it all off, in contradiction to what himself has said but just before, and tells us plainly, that there is something so libertine in poetry, that it cannot be confin'd to any rules ; that is to say, that there is no use of judgment in poetry, for judgment in any art, is only the determining what is proper, or improper, agreeable, or disagreeable to the rules of that art, which, instead of raising its excellence, as he designs by it, leaves it without any excellence at all ; for where there is no certain standard of excellence, or defect, there can be neither ; which reduces all manner of performances to a level, than
 which

which nothing can be more injurious to, or destructive of any art whatsoever.

From these considerations, I think that the importance, and necessity of this doctrine of the *Essay*, obtains the last evidence, since it establishes the sovereignty of judgment and reason in poetry, without which there can be no certain criterion of excellence.

Here I should all the various sorts of verse,
And the whole art of poetry rehearse.
But who that task would after *Horace* do?
The best of masters, and examples too!
Echoes at best, all we can say is vain;
Dull the design, and fruitless were the pain.
'Tis true, the ancients we may rob with ease;
But who with that sad shift himself can please,
Without an actor's pride? a player's art
Is above his, who writes a borrow'd part.
Yet modern laws are made for later faults;
And new absurdities inspire new thoughts.

In these few lines the noble author discovers that the design of his future precepts is not to repeat what has been so excellently treated of already by *Horace*; I may add, and by *Aristotle*, and all the other ancient critics; but to give us new instructions against the faults of modern writers, which were not known to those ancient masters, in the *Art of Poetry*, or at least not so plainly taken notice of as to strike our modern writers,

writers, tho' equally liable to, and deserving of correction, as will be very plain from the particulars which follow :

What need has *satire*, then, to live on theft,
 When so much fresh occasion still is left ?
 Fertile our soil, and full of rankest weeds,
 And monsters worse than ever *Nilus* breeds;
 But hold, the fools shall have no cause to fear,
 'Tis wit and sense that is the subject here.
 Defects of witty men deserve a cure,
 And those who are so, will ev'n this endure;

There are none sooner alarm'd with the appearance of a new critical discourse, or more violent declaimers against it, than the ignorant scribblers of all times ; for being unavoidably conscious of their real want of knowledge and art, they expect that such discourses should make it too evident to the world what egregious *coxcombs*, and worthless fools they are ; but their follies and ignorance rendring them absolutely incorrigible, makes it a very vain and fruitless attempt to endeavour their correction and reformation ; and therefore this noble author justly thinks them below his cognizance, and for that reason directs all that he has to say, to such men of wit, who, borne down by the tide of fancy, have neglected the necessary directions of reason and judgment, which should have deliver'd them from those defects that only deny
 that

that perfection to their writings they would otherwise have obtain'd.

To give precepts to the fools my lord speaks of, is to administer physick to the incurable ; for, first, they are always so abounding in their own sense, so ignorant of true excellence, and therefore so incapable of attaining it, that to tell them of any means of arriving at it, is to talk to them in a language utterly unknown to them ; but witty men, tho' they may be guilty of very great faults, are yet docile, and will allow the force of reason when they hear it, and therefore what my lord says is an evident truth.

*Defects of witty men deserve a cure,
And those who are so, will e'en this endure.*

First, then, of songs, which now so much
[abound,

Without his song no fop is to be found ;

A most offensive weapon, which he draws

On all he meets, against *Apollo's* laws.

Tho' nothing seems more easy, yet no part

Of poetry requires a nicer art :

For as in rows of richest *Pearl* there lies

Many a blemish that escapes our eyes ;

The least of which defects is plainly shown

In some small ring, and brings the value down ;

So Songs should be to just perfection wrought.
 Yet where can we see one without a fault,
 Exact propriety of words and thought ?
 Expressions easy, and the fancy high ;
 Yet that not seems to creep, nor this to fly ;
 No words transpos'd, but in such order all,
 As, tho' with care, may seem by chance to fall ?
 Here, as in all things else, is most unfit
 Bare Ribaldry, that poor pretence to wit ;
 Not that warm thoughts of the transporting joy
 Can shock the chastest, or the nicest cloy ;
 But obscene words, too gross to move desire,
 Like heaps of fewel, do but choak the fire.

What I have to say upon the *lyric poem* in general,
 or the *pindaric* in particular, I shall reserve till I come
 to that head ; for the precepts which the *Essay* gives
 here in relation to the lesser *ode*, or *song*, are so just,
 so plain, so evident, that they have not the least need
 of any comment ; they are likewise fine, as they are
 new, and as necessary as they are fine. My *Lord's*
 doctrine about the *song* is perfectly agreeable to rea-
 son, and the practice of the ancients, particularly of
Anacreon, in whose *songs* all those conditions here re-
 quir'd are perfectly observ'd, at least, as far as the
 two languages can admit.

I know

I know it has been objected as an inaccuracy in the *Essay*, that the *song* and the greater *ode* are divided, and the *elegy* thrown in between them. But first, the nature of an *Essay* does not require that strict and formal method, which other writings may perhaps demand; and next, our songs do not deserve to be join'd to the great *ode* of the ancients; and among us they have this material difference, that *songs* are all made and design'd for *musick*, and for that end are confin'd to a very few verses; but the greater *ode*, tho' among the ancients design'd for *musick*, among us seldom or never is, and is extended to a considerable length.

The song is the lowest sort of poetry of which the *Essay* takes any notice, and therefore is properly set in the first place, from whence the *Essay* rises, by several steps or degrees, to the greatest and most sublime performance in the art of poetry.

But tho' our songs are the lowest sort of poetry, of which the *Essay*, as I have observ'd, takes any notice; yet since the general bent of the people hurries so many away to the writing of them, and since a skilful performance, in this kind, is capable of affording something very agreeable, it was very well worth the care of our noble author to give these admirable rules; the following of which would furnish the writers of them with that agreeableness, which they require to be at all valuable.

One of the greatest obstacles, perhaps, to the perfection of our songs, is the slavish care or complaisance of the writers, to make their words to the goust of the composer, or musician; being oblig'd often to sacrifice their sense to certain sounding words, and se-

minine rhimes, or the like ; because they seem most adapted to furnish the composer with such cadences which most easily slide into their modern way of composition : And it is very observable, there is scarce one master of musick, who has set a song, composed with art and fine sense, to any tolerable tune ; but have generally exerted their musical faculty most upon such trifling words, as are scarce remov'd one degree from nonsense. There might be various instances given of the truth of this matter of fact ; but that would here be superfluous, since the reader need only cast his eye over the collections of the most celebrated songs for musick, to find it made evident beyond a contradiction ; I shall only give one instance of the contrary, tho' many might likewise be found of that, I mean Mr. Dryden's *Alexander's feast*, admirable in its sense, and the most harmonious in its numbers, of any thing in the *English* tongue : Numbers so harmonious, that had one of the ancient masters been to compose it, it had been one of the most transporting and ravishing pieces of musick that had been seen in the world these thousand years ; but alas ! tho' it has been twice set to musick by men of considerable reputation in that art, yet the notes of the musician have generally destroy'd, not only the sense, but the very harmony of the poet. I hear there is a third has undertaken it, a man of no mean fame in musical compositions, but I am afraid with not much more success than his predecessors ; because it seems absolutely necessary for a just and great composition of this kind, that the composer should have a poetical as well as a musical *genius*, which was a faculty eminent in all the *Greek* musicians, who, by perfectly under-

understanding and expressing the sense, force, and energy of words, produced those wonderful effects, the account of which seems almost incredible to these modern times, by reason of the different taste and notion which we have of musick from what the ancients had. They scarce ever employ'd their harmony in instrumental musick altogether, without the voice; nay, whatever they perform'd in musick, was confin'd to some imitation or other, and this imitation was the most visible, and the most certainly obtain'd by joining the sounds, or notes to the words, and expressing that imitation in sounds, which they found deliver'd in the words themselves; so that there was always found in their composition something extremely pathetic and moving, which always engag'd the heart, and stir'd up the passions, or calm'd them, according to the subject of the poem; by which means the most transporting pleasure must ensue, from the conjoint force of poetry and musick, united in the same entertainment. But indeed the poets of *Greece* were almost always equally proficient in the art of musick, and so capable of composing their own works.

But it is much otherwise in our modern ages, and that even in *Italy* it self. *Pancirollus*, an *Italian*, in his book *De Rebus inventis & amissis*, can afford no better title, even to the *Italian* musick, than a sort of trifling fribling in musical sounds. Perhaps, he may have gone too far in his contempt of the modern masters; yet is his censure far from being without ground, since the modern students in musick make empty sounds, with their several concords and discords, in their position and regard of each other, their principal, if not only care. It is impossible that they

should ever arrive, with the utmost application they are capable of, at a perfection which mere sounds can never produce. Quite contrary to the ancients, our modern masters, as *Corelli*, and others, make instrumental musick, absolutely independent on words, their chief, if not only study, and can therefore give us no delight, but that which mere sounds are capable of producing, the most artful mixture of which speaks but to the head, very seldom extending to the heart; I say very seldom, because 'tis possible that there may be some exceptions to this general rule, but they are very few, and confin'd to some particular instruments. The light *Arietto's*, and the prodigious number of divisions, even to double *semi-quavers*, go no farther than the head. The latter *Harry Purcel* used to call stuttering in musick, and affords a satisfaction (if it affords any) very distinct from harmony; since it is only to show a wonderful volubility in the hand of the performer; for whilst it breaks that length, which is necessary to give a just harmony to musical sounds, by splitting them into almost imperceptible fractions, they utterly destroy the very end and perfection of musick. They who have justly weigh'd the difference of instruments, have prefer'd those which have the advantage of continued, and lengthen'd sounds, such as the *organ*, *violin*, and some wind instruments; and the want of this advantage upon the lute it self, has made some of the greatest masters that I have known on it, full of complaints of this defect, and rais'd their endeavours and invention to find out a remedy, but to no purpose. The finest, sweetest, and most moving tone of any hand instrument that I know, is the *Irish harp*; we may perhaps

add

add the *polyphon*; but then there can be no sound of any length express'd fully upon these instruments, which is supply'd by a frequent repercussion of the same string, and so is fain to give us three, or four, or five notes for one, which likewise, to a nice ear, robs the sound of that harmony, which a full vibration of the string would give it.

It may be objected, that there is another defect upon the *Irish harp*, which over-ballances the fineness of its tone, and that is the want of the half notes, the *flats* and *sharps*; but that is what I think may by industry be supply'd on the *Irish harp*, as well as it is already done on the *Welsh harp*: On these instruments, the divisions might do tolerably well, since the instruments themselves are incapable of lengthen'd sounds.

Sounds alone, without any regard to, or thought of sense and poetry, being the whole and sole object of the mind, study, and application of the modern masters of musick, it is no wonder they know so little of the nature and beauty of words. When they have a song to set, they consider not the sense nor design of the poet, but only such sounds as hit their ear, and are most adapted to those musical tones, which fill their heads, and possess their whole minds, a regard to which has not only misled our vulgar songsters, but even some men of admirable genius and understanding, who have frequently sacrificed their sense to the sound, for the musician's sake.

The *Greeks*, quite contrary to the moderns, were a people too rational, and of too fine and just a taste, to encourage or even relish any musical performance, that consisted meerly of sound, since that could afford

little or no entertainment to the mind, or at all engage the understanding, without which they never thought any diversion worthy their attention. They gave *Amphion* and *Orpheus* charming voices, and words divinely inspir'd, to produce the wonders they tell us of their *Lyres*, which serv'd only to accompany their vocal performances.

I know that *Saxo Grammaticus* has given an account of a *fiddler* of his northern clime, who, by his admirable performance upon the *violin*, rais'd in his hearers whatever passion he pleas'd, to its utmost violence; and immediately, by changing his notes, either quell'd that passion, or rais'd some other, tho' contrary to it in its nature, to an equal excess. But this must be put among the ridiculous fables of that author, since musick was never in any tolerable degree of perfection in those northern countries; and it is therefore so evident a fiction, that it can afford no manner of advantage to the fautors of instrumental musick. I confess, that *Harry Purcel*, in his *frost scene*, has, by the artful mixture of *flats* and *sharps*, pretty well imitated the shuddering cold of the climate where the scene lies; but even there he is help'd out by *Mr. Dryden's* words; and tho' that musician made nearer approaches to the manner of the *Greek* masters, in expressing the force and energy of the words, than any other composer that I know of, yet he very frequently mistook them, even in some of his most celebrated songs.

But a thorough examination of the ancient musick, its comparison with, and its excellence above the modern musick, is of too large an extent for this place, and requires indeed an entire treatise by its self; and
which,

which, if life and health supply ability, I do design to give the world. The little that I have here said upon it, is, I hope, sufficient to make out the point I contend for, and for which I introduc'd it.

The subject of our common songs is generally either gallantry or drinking; by gallantry, I mean the lighter or more trivial parts of love, several of which may in some measure be call'd serious, but most either *humorous* or *epigrammatic*, and indeed are very often entire *epigrams*, express'd after the lyric manner; but these are trifles not worth our consideration. He that would write a valuable song, must study thoroughly what our noble author delivers upon that head, till he becomes an absolute master of the precepts both in speculation and practice. A song, compos'd by this model, would deserve that praise which *Boileau* in his *art of poetry* gives to a justly written *sonnet* in *French*, which is much of the same nature with our songs.

*A faultless sonnet, finish'd thus, would be
Worth tedious volumes of loose poetry.*

Some of the *English* song writers have been guilty of obscenity in their songs; a fault so gross, and yet so common, could not be omitted, or escape the censure of so just a *critic* as the noble author of this *Essay*; let us therefore hear what his opinion of this point is.

*Here, as in all things else, is most unfit
Bare ribaldry, that poor pretence to wit;
Not that warm thoughts of the transporting joy
Can shock the chafest, or the nicest cloy;*

But

*But obscene words, too gross to move desire,
Like heaps of sewel, do but choak the fire.*

There is nothing more true and just than this censure; for tho' it be possible that there may be some little wit in *bare ribaldry*, yet it is always of a low, mean, and vulgar nature, and can be agreeable to no man of a fine taste, and must be shocking to all the ladies, and is at most but the nauseous pertness of a porter-like *genius*.

My lord *Roscommon* declares himself of the same opinion, in his *Essay upon translated verse*, in the following words :

*Immodest words (whatever the pretence)
Always want decency, and often sense.*

He might have said, that want of decency is want of sense, for so it certainly is; for what greater argument of want of sense can there be in a writer, than to disgust and shock where he designs to please? and it is certain that every reader is disgusted with *bare ribaldry*, except the most debauch'd, and even the lowest rank of mankind; nay, the writer ought in reason to blush at his own performance, and not be fond or vain of it, according to that of Mr. *Cowley*.

——— *For 'tis but just,
The writer blush there, where the reader must.*

I know it may be urg'd, that some of the ancients, of no vulgar name, have been guilty of this want of decency, as *Catullus*, *Juvenal*, and some others. But
I am

I am very sure that this practice of the ancient poets mentioned will afford no protection to the modern transgressors in this point ; because the customs and opinions of times are extreamly different, and many words, which in a verbatim translation would be highly obscene, were not so in the original, the gravest authors having made use of them without the least reproach. *Peni inservire* is made use of by *Sallust* himself, without the least reproach on this account, which yet could not be put into exact *English* without an immodest word, or an offence against decency.

Petronius Arbiter indeed has been often too guilty of this *bare ribaldry* ; but then he seems thrown upon it by the necessity of his subject, which was graphically to describe, and by that means expose the more effectually the abominable lewdness of the secret rites of *Priapus* ; but our modern writers of *ribaldry* have no such plausible excuse, but seem to do it meerly for the sake of the nauseous sound and expression.

It may likewise be said, that in some excellent naked statues of the great sculptors of antiquity, and several pieces of painting by the best masters of *Italy*, the obscene nudities are often express'd, without any disguise or covering ; but then we must consider, that the nature of these statues and pictures force the artist upon it, and that the parts are so minute, and have so little share in the mastery of the performance, that they are not at all taken notice of, even by the most lewd and debauch'd beholder : But the bare-fac'd bawdry of our modern writers stares you in the face, and forces your regard as the principal part of the entertainment, and, like the filthy *Priapus's* mention'd by *Lucian* to be in the temple of the *Dea Syria*, they
present

present you with nothing else but lewd and beastly Images, which is sufficient to show the justness of this censure of the *Essay*.

*Not that warm thoughts of the transporting joy
Can shock the chastest, or the nicest cloy.*

The illustrious author of the *Essay* by these lines allows scope enough to the expression of the warmest sallies of love. An excellent example of this is a poem call'd the *Enjoyment*, said to be written by a nobleman of the first magnitude; but he not having yet been pleas'd to own it, I shall not presume to mention his name; where all the warmth of the very accomplishment of love is express'd without the least offence to decency. But now let us proceed to the *Elegy*.

Next, *Elegy*, of sweet, but solemn voice,
And of a subject grave exacts the choice;
The praise of beauty, valour, wit contains,
And there too oft despairing love complains.
In vain, alas! for who by wit is mov'd?
That *Phoenix* she deserves to be belov'd;
But noisy nonsense, and such fops as vex
Mankind, take most with that fantastic sex:
This to the praise of those who better knew,
The many raise the value of the few.

But

But here, as all our sex too oft have try'd,
 Women have drawn my wandring thoughts a-
 [side.

Their greatest fault, who in this kind have writ,
 Is not defect in words, nor want of wit.

But should this muse harmonious numbers yield,
 And every couplet be with fancy fill'd;

If yet a just coherence be not made

Between each thought, and the whole model laid
 So right, that every line may higher rise,

Like goodly mountains, till they reach the skies;
 Such trifles may perhaps of late have past,

And may be lik'd awhile, but never last;

'Tis epigram, 'tis point, 'tis what you will,

But not an elegy, nor writ with skill,

No * *Panegyrick* nor a † *Cooper's Hill*.

Before I proceed to offer what I have to say upon
 the artifice and nature of the elegiac poem, I think it
 necessary to put the reader in mind, that the noble
 author of the *Essay* has a more immediate view to the
 correction of the errors of the modern poems of this
 kind, and such as may be reduc'd under this head,
 than

* Waller.

† Denham.

than to the performances of the ancients, who have excell'd in the *elegy*; and this, without doubt, is the reason that the examples, or instances which he gives of the perfection of this poem, are taken from two *English* poets, that is, from *Waller* and *Denham*.

To give a further proof of this, I shall repeat what the *Essay* says upon this head towards the beginning.

*Yet modern laws are made for later faults,
And new absurdities inspire new thoughts.*

But first let us hear what *Horace* and *Boileau* say upon this subject :

*Elegies were at first design'd for grief,
Though now we use them to express our joy;
But to whose muse we owe that sort of verse,
Is undecided by the men of skill.*

And *Boileau* thus :

*The Elegy, that loves a mournful stile,
With unbound hair, weeps at a funeral pile;
It paints the lovers torments and delights,
A mistress flatters, threatens, and invites;
But well these raptures if you'll make us see,
You must know love as well as poetry.
I hate those lukewarm authors, whose forc'd fire
In a cold stile describe a hot desire;
That sigh by rule, and, raging in cold blood,
Their sluggish muse whip to an amorous mood;
Their feign'd transports appear but flat and vain,
They always sigh, and always hug their chain;*

*Adore their prison, and their suff'rings bless,
 Make sense and reason quarrel as they please.
 'Twas not of old in this affected tone,
 That smooth Tibullus made his amorous moan ;
 Nor Ovid, when instructed from above,
 By nature's rules he taught the art of love.
 The heart in elegies forms the discourse.*

Horace is extremely short upon this poem, confining its subjects to grief and joy, under which general heads all which relates to love may be very well included; for love has been too long establish'd both in *Greek* and *Latin* a chosen subject of the *elegy*, for *Horace* to have no regard to it in the words he made use of.

Boileau confines the subject of the *elegy* to grief and love, but in his observations dwells chiefly upon love, giving very useful and just precepts for the young writer of amorous *elegies*; but the *elegy* was more notoriously distinguish'd from other sorts of poems by its verse than its subject; for even in the time of *Horace* himself it had admitted almost all kinds of subjects, except such as provok'd laughter, or were satirical.

It would be a very vain and superfluous labour to endeavour to give you the origin of this sort of verse, or say who was the inventor of it, since *Horace* himself leaves it in doubt, when they had much better helps for such a discovery than any we can now pretend to, nor is it of any great consequence to us, since the verse itself is not made use of in our tongue. It consisted in a verse of six feet, and one of five, in which couplet the sense was generally compleat, tho' not always, there being several examples in *Ovid*, as well

well as other elegiac writers; of the sense being carry'd on into the second couplet. How far this ought to be a rule among us in writings of this nature, I shall leave to be decided by better judges.

Ovid's calendar, or his book *De Fastis*, as well as his letters *De Ponto*, give sufficient proof of that variety of subject which the *elegy* admitted, even in those days, since every thing that was written in that sort of verse was esteem'd *elegy*, except epigrams.

This variety being so visible in the ancients, we may well allow the *Essay*, in the place under our consideration, to admit more subjects into the modern *Elegy* than grief and love; since indeed most of our modern copies of verses, except *Epigrams*, *Satires*, *Burlesk*, and the like, may be reduc'd under this head of *elegy*, provided always that the conditions requir'd by the *Essay* are to be found in them; that is, that they be sweet, and that they be solemn and grave.

*Next, elegy, of sweet, but solemn voice,
And of a subject grave exacts the choice.*

But whether it be the praise of beauty, valour, or wit, or the complaints of love, or indeed any other subject which may be brought under this head, my lord duke's rules of *elegy* reach them all; for every one ought to have that connection, and productive chain, here mention'd by the *Essay*.

*But shou'd this muse harmonious numbers yield,
And every couplet be with fancy fill'd;
If yet a just coherence be not made
Between each thought, and the whole model laid*

*So right, that every line may higher rise,
Like goodly mountains, till they reach the skies.*

There is nothing more common, or more evident than this want of a just coherence in most of the taking poems that have been publish'd these fifty years, and therefore it was worthy of the good sense of our author, to form a rule that was so necessary for the valuable subsistence of this poem; nay, indeed, of all poems; for this connexion ought to be in *poems* of all kinds, tho' in *English* we scarce have it in any kind, not even in *tragedy* itself. As in *tragedy* the incidents ought, from the beginning to the end, to produce one another to the very *discovery* and change of fortune; so the lines of a well writ *elegy*, or poem, ought, from the beginning to the end, to beget each other, and show a visible dependance of each upon the other, till the whole subject be entirely exhausted. But this cannot be done, unless the poet makes a plan, or model of his poem, before he sits down to write a word of it. This is the constant practice of *Ovid*, both in his shorter, as well as longer *elegies*, as the *English* reader will find in some of the translations both of his *elegies* and *epistles*; some of them, I say, because taking out five or six of his *epistles*, which are admirably translated, the rest will give the *English* reader but a very weak idea of the *Latin* original, I mean *Sapho* to *Phaon*, by Mr. *Pope*; *Canace* to *Macaerus*, and *Dido* to *Æneas*, by Mr. *Dryden*; *Helena* to *Paris*, by Mr. *Dryden* and the duke of *Buckinghamshire*; two of Mr. *Duke's*, and one of Mr. *Otway's*. And I could heartily wish, for the sake of the *English* readers, that Mr. *Pope* would be prevail'd up-

on to give us the rest by his hand ; for it is certain, that we see the original of *Sapho* to *Phaon* with much more life and likeness than in that of *Sir Carr Scroop's*; and this is the more to be wish'd, because in the *English* tongue we scarce have any thing truly and naturally written upon love, either because our poets have not been lovers, or our lovers no poets ; for as *Boileau* says,

*But well those raptures if you'll make us see,
You must know love as well as poetry ;
I hate those lukewarm authors, whose forc'd fire
In a cold stile describes a hot desire.*

The ingenious *Mr. Walsh* requires two conditions in a writer of love verses : First, that he be in love when he writes ; and next, that he have got rid of that passion when he corrects. But whether this expedient would be of force enough to give us better love-verses, or not, I very much question ; because it is very certain that a man may be very much in love, and yet not be able to express that passion beautifully in verse ; whereas we find *Ovid*, by the support of a strong genius, writing in the most pathetic manner on subjects which were entirely fictitious, and in which, by consequence, he could have no personal engagement. But leaving this matter in that uncertainty in which we find it, I'll only say, in vindication of the ladies, that if our amorous complaints were more moving and lively, they would find a more successful regard with the fair sex ; which reflection may perhaps afford them some small defence against the severity of the following lines.

And

*And there too, oft despairing love complains:
 In vain, alas ! for who by wit is mov'd ?
 That Phoenix she deserves to be belov'd ;
 But noisy nonsense, and such fops as vex
 Mankind, take most with that fantastic sex ;
 This to the praise of those who better knew,
 The many raise the value of the few.*

'Tis true that in Rome there was a *Lesbia* and a *Ty-coris* false to, and neglectful of a *Catullus* and a *Gal-lus* ; and it is very probable that many a pert coxcomb bore away the female prize from *Propertius* and *Tibul-lus*, and even *Ovid* himself. But let the *Roman* ladies bear the blame alone, who could be deaf to such harmony, and such lovers, while they squander'd their favours away on fops and fools ; but let not the *English* ladies suffer, till they have it in their power to prove that they are govern'd by the same fantastic caprice. It may perhaps be objected, that where ever a coxcomb and a man of sense make their addresses to a woman, she will certainly reject the man of sense, and grow fond of the fool. But I must in their behalf reply : First, that in this they are no more scandalously guilty than most of our great men in Power, who, in the choice of their favourites, consult not the merit of the person, but their own blind ignorant fancy and inclination.

Next, I must urge in their behalf, that they are no more guilty in this particular than the men, who, in the choice of their mistresses, have regard only to the beauty of their bodies, without consulting, or considering that of the mind ; and indeed, the body is

so much concern'd in affairs of this nature, that it is no wonder that we should pass the beauties of the mind over, as things with which we have very little business.

The enjoyments betwixt the two sexes are generally, if not always corporal ; and it is very hard to find a woman who can furnish even a small desert of wit to the banquet of love, and that for the most part of the most trifling kind. Now if we our selves in love prefer the endowments of the person to those of the mind, what reason have we to upbraid this as a crime to the fair ? They who would urge this argument further, would needs have it that some men have fallen in love with women only for their wit ; and *Scribonia*, whose person was almost forbidding, ever maintain'd a more absolute sovereignty over her lovers by the charms of her wit, than ever *Belinda* could with all the most exquisite and transporting beauties of body that ever woman was mistress of ; the folly of *Belinda's* tongue never fail'd soon to put an end to the dominion of her eyes, when the wit of *Scribonia* very seldom fail'd of raising desire out of indifference.

In short, I have known many men of wit in love with a woman for her ingenuity, but scarce ever remember to have known one woman of wit, who in her amours could ever find in her heart to prefer the man of sense to the coxcomb ; so that upon the whole matter, I am afraid we must allow that this censure on the fair sex, which we find in the *Essay on Poetry*, is better grounded than perhaps it may at first seem to be to the favourers of the ladies.

*In vain, alas ! for who by wit is mov'd ?
 That Phoenix she deserves to be belov'd ;
 But noisy nonsense, and such fops as vex
 Mankind, take most with that fantastic sex.*

I know of but two exceptions, at least I can remember but two in all history, both sacred and profane, of women who paid any deference to a man's sense. The first is the queen of *Sheba*, who undertook a very long journey to hear the wit, wisdom, or poetry of *Solomon* ; but in this instance there seems a great alloy of curiosity ; but this curiosity springing from the fame of *Solomon's* sense, I will not insist that it ought to be any diminution of the queen of *Sheba's* merit.

The second exception is of a countess of *Tripoli*, who liv'd in the time of our *Richard I.* and of the most celebrated *Provencial* poets, men of no inconsiderable name in those times. One of these poets fell in love with the countess of *Tripoli*, from the account he had heard of her beauty, wit, bounty, hospitality, and other excellent virtues, and accordingly writ many verses in her praise, as well as to express his passion for her, which was now grown to that height, that he could no longer defer the undertaking a voyage to see her ; the fatigues of which voyage threw him into a fever, which prov'd so violently fatal, that in less than two days after he landed at *Tripoli* he dy'd, but had the satisfaction of expiring, if not in the arms, yet in the presence of the charming countess of *Tripoli*, and of seeing the grief and tears he caus'd by the deplorable state he was in. The countess shew'd all the marks of esteem and love for

him that could be expected, bestowing on him a most magnificent funeral, in which she was the chief mourner, and erected to his memory a porpyhry monument, and had engrav'd on it a large epitaph, expressing the merits of the dead poet, and the excellence of his verses, which she caus'd to be collected, and fairly transcrib'd, adorn'd with all the ornaments of the writing of those times, and kept them by her as her constant companion as long as she liv'd.

These two examples are sufficient to show that there is no rule so general, but that it admits of some exceptions; there may be more, but these are all that ever came to my knowledge.

But to return, with my illustrious author, from this short digression, into which the fair sex has led us both, we must observe, that point, fine thoughts, and quaint expressions are not the business of this sort of poem, tho' what our versifiers mingle with every sort of writing; and the reason why these *Dalilabs* of our modern poetry are excluded from this sort of poem, seems to be, that they are of too light and trivial a nature to be compatible with that gravity which our author in the very beginning makes absolutely necessary to the *elegy*.

The subjects of *elegy* being so various, and our way of managing of them so different from that of the ancients, more particular rules for the forming, or managing the several subjects, would run out into too large an extent for my present undertaking, for it would engage me in giving precepts about the nature of praise, of beauty, of valour, of wit, and the like; of all which I would suppose the writer thoroughly acquainted before he pretends to meddle with

with them. If the reader has a mind to see such rules as may be of help to him in composing after the ancient model of *elegy*, he may consult my discourse upon that poem in my *Compleat Art of Poetry*, not being willing to repeat the same things over again, especially since the fulness of my lord duke's general instructions seems not at all to stand in need of any such repetition.

As for examples of the several sorts of subjects, either according to the ancient method, or the modern, I shall leave them to the reader's judgment, to make choice of in any of those authors who have been eminent in this kind, whether ancient or modern; but for funeral *elegy*, which was the original source, the first subject of *elegy* itself, I think there is nothing to be found in all the prophane poets comparable to that *elegy* sung, or spoken by *David*, on the death of *Saul* and *Jonathan*, and which therefore I shall transcribe, it not being long.

*The beauty of Israel is slain upon the high places, how
are the mighty fallen!*

*Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Aska-
lon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the
daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.*

*Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let
there be rain upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the
shield of the mighty is vilely cast away; the shield of Saul,
as though he had not been anointed with oil.*

*From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty,
the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of
Saul returned not empty.*

Saul and Jonathan were lovely in their lives, and in their deaths they were not divided; they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.

Ye daughters of Israel weep over Saul, who cloth'd you in scarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel.

How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battel! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places.

I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan, very pleasant hast thou been unto me, thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!

The next sort of poem that the *Essay* takes notice of is the *Ode*. The words are these:

A higher flight, and of a happier force
'Are * *Odes*, the muses most unruly horse,
That bounds so fierce, the rider has no rest,
But foams at mouth, and moves like one poss-
[fest.

The poet here must be indeed inspir'd,
With fury too, as well as fancy fir'd.
Cowley might boast to have perform'd this part,
Had he with nature join'd the rules of art ;
But

* Pindaric Odes.

But ill expreffion gives fometimes allay
 To nobler thoughts, whole fame will ne'er
 [decay.

Tho' all appear in heat and fury done,
 The language ftill muft foft and eafy run.
 Thefe laws may found a little too fevere,
 But judgment yields, and fancy governs here ;
 Which, tho' extravagant, this mufe allows,
 And makes the work much eafier than it fhows.

It is plain that the *Effay* takes notice here only of thofe *odes* which we call pindaric ; and this, without doubt, is the reafon that there is no mention of the particular fubjects which the *Ode* admits, becaufe the fubjects this *ode* celebrates among us, are fufficiently known to be all fublime, always great and magnificent, and which great fubjects it always treats in the moft fublime and lofty manner, with the higheft warmth, and fo great an extravagance of fancy, that it is apt to hurry the writer away beyond all the bounds of reafon and judgment, and fometimes makes him deviate into the borders of nonfence, under the fpecious name of a heated imagination, and poetic enthufiafm ; but this warmth, this heat, this fire, their extent and liberties, and the caution which ought to be us'd in the managing of them, cannot be more fully and emphatically exprefs'd than in the words of the *Effay* itfelf.

A higher

*A higher flight, and of a happier force,
 Are Odes, the muses most unruly horse ;
 That bounds so fierce, the rider has no rest,
 But foams at mouth, and moves like one possest :
 The poet here must be indeed inspir'd,
 With fury too, as well as fancy fir'd.*

The chief, if not the only precept the *Essay* gives us upon this poem, regards the diction in these words.

*Tho' all appear in heat, and fury done,
 The language still must soft and easy run.*

And that want of art which Cowley is here arraigned for, is his defect in numbers and expression. Before I quit this head, I think my self obliged to take notice of these two verses in the *Essay*.

*These Laws may sound a little too severe;
 But Judgment yields, and fancy governs here ;
 Which, tho' extravagant, this muse allows,
 And makes the work much easier than it shows.*

Some have push'd this expression of the *Essay* much further than ever the author could intend it ; that is, to the total exclusion of judgment from this poem : But it is plain the noble author never could have any such meaning, because he could not be contradictory to himself. In the beginning of the poem, he has told us plainly, that

— *Without Judgment fancy is but mad.*

So that his Grace could never think of discharging judgment entirely from all manner of rule, in a poem to which he has given so considerable a dignity. All therefore that can be meant by these lines is, that judgment guides fancy with a looser rein here than any where else.

These two lines from *Boileau* seem no ill comment upon this part of the *Essay*.

*Her generous stile at random oft will part,
And by a brave disorder shows her art.*

But the best comment and explanation of what is here delivered in the *Essay*, will be to lay down an example in one of the *Odes*, written by *Pindar* himself, as we have it translated by Mr. *Cowley*, which, allowing for some expressions, and some roughnesses of the versification, will give the reader a full view of the nature of this poem.

O D E.

I.

QUEEN of all harmonious things,
Dancing words, and speaking strings,
What God, what Hero, wilt thou sing?
What happy man to equal glories bring?
Begin thy noble choice,
And let the hills around reflect the image of thy voice.
Pisa does to Jove belong,
Jove and Pisa claim thy song.

The fair first fruits of war, th' Olympick Games,

Alcides

Alcides offer'd up to Jove ;
 Alcides too thy strings may move.
 But, Oh, what man to join with these can worthy prove?
 Join Theron boldly to their sacred names,
 Theron the next honour claims ;
 Theron to no man gives place,
 Is first in Pisa's, and in virtue's race ;
 Theron there, and he alone,
 Ev'n his own swift fore-fathers has outgone.

II.

They through rough ways, o'er many stops they past,
 Till on the fatal Bank at last
 They Agrigentum built, the beauteous Eye
 Of fair-fac'd Sicily,
 Which does it self i'th river by
 With pride and joy espy.
 Then chearful notes their painted years did sing,
 And wealth was one, and honour th' other wing.
 Their genuine virtues did more sweet and clear
 In fortune's graceful dress appear.
 To which great son of Rhea, say
 The firm word which forbids things to decay ;
 If in Olympus' top, where thou
 Sit'st to behold thy sacred show ;
 If in Alpheus' silver flight,
 If in my verse thou dost delight ;
 My verse, O Rhea's son, which is
 Lofly as that, and smooth as this.

III.

For the past sufferings of this noble race,
 (Since things once past, and fled out of thine hand,

Hearken

Hearken no more to thy command)
Let present joys fill up their place,
And with oblivion's silent stroke deface
Of fore-gone ills the very trace.
In no illustrious line
Do these happy changes shine
More brightly, Theron, than in thine.
So in the crystal palaces
Of the blue-ey'd Nereides,
Ino her endless youth does please,
And thanks her fall into the seas.
Beauteous Semele does no less
Her cruel midwife, thunder, bless,
Whilst sporting with the Gods on high,
She enjoys secure their company,
Plays with lightnings as they fly,
Nor trembles at the bright embraces of the deity.

IV.

But death did them from future dangers free;
What God (alas) will caution be
For living man's security,
Or will ensure our vessel in this faithless sea?
Never did the sun as yet
So healthful a fair day beget,
That travelling mortals might rely on it.
But fortune's favour, and her spight,
Roll with alternate waves, like day and night.
Vicissitudes, which thy great race pursue,
E'er since the fatal son his father slew,
And did old oracles fulfil
Of Gods that cannot lie, for they foretel but their own will.

V. Erynnis

V.

Erynnis saw't, and made in her own seed
 The innocent Parricide to bleed;
 She slew his wrathful Sons with mutual blows.
 But better things did then succeed, [arose.
 And brave Therfander in amends for what was past
 Brave Therfander was by none
 In war, or warlike sports outdone.
 Thou, Theron, his great virtues dost revive,
 He in my verse and thee again does live;
 Loud Olympus happy thee,
 Isthmus and Nemea does twice happy see.
 For the well natur'd honour there,
 Which with thy Brother thou didst share,
 Was to thee double grown,
 By not being all thy own.
 And those kind pious glories do deface
 The old fraternal quarrel of thy race.

VI.

Greatness of mind, and fortune too,
 Th' Olympick Trophies show.
 Both their several parts must do
 In the noble chase of fame;
 This without that is blind, that without this is lame.
 Nor is fair virtue's picture seen aright,
 But in fortune's golden light.
 Riches alone are of uncertain date,
 And on short man long cannot wait.
 The virtuous make of them the best,
 And put them out to fame for interest;
 With a frail good they wisely buy
 The solid purchase of eternity.

They;

(III)

*They, whilst life's air they breathe, consider well and know,
Th' account they must hereafter give below.*

Whereas th' unjust and covetous, above,

In deep antrovels vaules,

By the just decrees of Jove,

Unrelenting torments prove,

The heavy necessary effects of voluntary faults.

VII.

Whilst in the lands of unexhausted light,

O'er which the God-like Sun's unwearied sight

Ne'er winks in Clouds, or sleeps in night,

An endless Spring of age the good enjoy,

Where neither want does pinch, nor plenty cloy ;

There neither earth, nor sea, they plow,

Nor aught to labour owe

For food, that whilst it nourishes does decay,

And in the lamp of life consumes away.

Thrice had these men through mortal bodies past,

Did thrice the trial undergo,

Till all their little drops was purg'd at last,

The furnace had no more to do.

Then in rich Saturn's peaceful state

Were they for sacred treasures plac'd,

The muse-discover'd world of islands fortunate.

VIII.

Soft-footed winds with tuneful voices there

Dance through the perfum'd air.

There silver Rivers through enamell'd meadows glide,

And golden Trees enrich their side.

Th' illustrious leaves no dropping autumn fear,

And jewels for their fruit they bear,

*

Which

*Which by the blest are gathered
 For bracelets to the arm, and garlands to the head,
 Here all the heroes and their poets live ;
 Wise Rhadamanthus did the sentence give,
 Who for his justice was thought fit
 With sovereign Saturn on the bench to sit.
 Peleus here, and Cadmus reign ;
 Here great Achilles wrathful now no more,
 Since his blest mother (who before
 Had try'd it on his body in vain)
 Dipt now his soul in Stygian lake,
 Which did from thence a divine hardness take,
 That does from passion, and from vice, invulnerable make.*

IX.

*To Theron, Muse, bring back thy wandring song,
 Whom those bright troops expect impatiently ;
 And may they do so long.
 How, noble Archer, do thy wanton arrows fl-
 At all the game that does but cross thine eye ?
 Shoot, and spare not, for I see
 Thy sounding quiver can ne'er empty'd be.
 Let art use method and good husbandry.
 Art lives on nature's alms, is weak and poor ;
 Nature herself has unexhausted store,
 Wallows in wealth, and runs a turning maze,
 That no vulgar eye can trace.
 Art, instead of mounting high,
 About her humble food does hov'ring fly,
 Like the ignoble crow, rapine and noise does love ;
 Whilst nature, like the sacred bird of Jove,
 Now bears loud thunder, and anon, with silent joy,
 The beauteous Phrygian Boy*

Defeats the strong, o'ertakes the flying prey,
 And sometimes basks in th' open flames of day;
 And sometimes too he shrouds
 His soaring wings among the clouds.

X.

Leave, wanton Muse, thy roving flight,
 To thy loud string the well-fledg'd arrow put,
 Let Agrigentum be the butt,
 And Theron be the white.
 And lest the name of verse should give
 Malicious men pretext to misbelieve,
 By the Castalian Waters swear
 (A sacred oath, no poets dare
 To take in vain,
 No more than Gods do that of Styx prophane)
 Swear, in no city e'er before,
 A better man, or greater-soul'd was born :
 Swear, that Theron sure has sworn
 No man near him should be peer.
 Swear, that none e'er had such a graceful art,
 Fortune's free gifts as freely to impart
 With an unnervious hand, and an unbounded heart.

XI.

But in this thankless world the givers
 Are env'y'd ev'n by the receivers,
 'Tis now the cheap and frugal fashion,
 Rather to hide than pay the obligation.
 Nay 'tis much worse than so,
 It now an artifice does grow,
 Wrongs and outrages to do,
 Lest men should think we owe.

*Such monsters, Theron, has thy virtue found.
 But all the malice they profess,
 Thy secure honour cannot wound :
 For thy vast bounties are so numberless,
 That them or to conceal, or else to tell,
 Is equally impossible.*

I have transcribed Mr. Cowley's translation of this *Ode* of *Pindar*, that the reader might, by an example, see what a *pindaric Ode* is, and how it is to be managed; for tho' this be a sort of paraphrastic translation, as Mr. Cowley himself owns, yet it plainly and visibly contains all the conditions of what we call a *pindaric poem*, its beautiful wanderings, and its happy returns to the subject.

Monf. la Motte, a French author in the *Lyric* way, will needs have it that *Pindar* was thrown upon these digressions, as well as the praise of the gods, and heroes of the race of him whom he celebrates, by the barrenness and uniformity of his subject. But first, this could not be the cause in all his *Odes*, particularly in this on *Theron*, whose other actions could have furnish'd him with matter of praise sufficient to have finish'd his poem without any digression, as his deposing and taking the tyrant of *Himera*, his beating the *Carthaginian* general, and several other noble actions of that prince.

Next, *Monf. la Motte* seems guilty of a strange blunder here, in attributing the praise which *Pindar* gives to the gods, *Heroes*, and founders of the city to which his patron belonged, as meer helps forc'd in by the poet to supply the barrenness of his subject; whereas the praise of the city, its founders, and the heroes of any race

face, are the common and allowed topics of praise fix'd by the rules of *rhetorick* it self. I will allow Mr. *la Motte*, that it is not essential to the *Ode*, to treat of nothing but princes, heroes, and gods; but must contend, that what we call now a *pindaric Ode*, must have some of those, or something equally sublime for its subject; there wou'd else be no room for that enthusiasm, warmth, or heat requir'd by the *Essay*, and allow'd even by Mr. *la Motte* himself.

As for the other subjects of the ode which Mr. *la Motte* requires, I shall say a few words of them when I have done with this head.

Tho' much of the beauty of *Pindar's* manner, especially his wanderings and fine returns to his subject, may be discovered by Mr. *Cowley's* translation of this *Ode*; yet methinks we do not find that warmth, that enthusiasm and vehemence which the *Essay* makes so peculiar a quality to this *Ode*, and which *Horace* himself, in his *Ode* on the praise of *Pindar*, seems to attribute to him. It is my opinion that much of this in *Pindar* depends upon his *diction*, and therefore may easily be lost, even in the best translation of him into another language. To supply this defect, and not leave the reader without some image of what is here only mentioned in words, I am oblig'd to have recourse to some of the songs or *Odes* of the *Hebrew* poets, such as *Moses*, *Deborah*, *David*, and some others, where he will find that heat, that divine enthusiasm, that true sublime, which is no where else to be met with, at least in that perfection which even our vulgar translations give us.

I hope the reader will pardon my giving him so much of scripture, because there seems here a ne-

cessity for it; and next, I shall trouble him with no more in these commentaries; and I am sure if he has any soul or genius for poetry, it must give him the highest transport and pleasure; for who can read or hear the song of *Moses*, without such emotions as must produce the most sovereign delight? I shall therefore begin my quotations with this song.

I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my fathers God, and I will exalt him.

The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name.

Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the red sea.

The depths have covered them, they sank into the bottom as a stone.

Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy.

And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble.

And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together; the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.

The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil: my lust shall be satisfied upon them, I will draw my sword, mine hand shall destroy them.

Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead into the mighty waters.

Who is like unto thee, O LORD, amongst the gods? who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?

Thou

Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them.

Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.

The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina.

Then the dukes of Edom shall be amaz'd, the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold of them: all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away.

Fear and dread shall fall upon them, by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone: till thy people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over which thou hast purchased.

Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in: in the sanctuary, O LORD, which thy hands have established.

The LORD shall reign for ever and ever.

I might here quote likewise the song of *Deborah*, and *Barak*, which is wonderfully fine; but that being likewise a song of triumph upon the success of the *Israelites* against *Sisera*, I shall only desire the reader to read it over, in the fifth chapter of the book of *Judges*, and shall here add an *Ode* or song of *David* upon a different subject, in that sublime diction, with which *Mr. Dennis* has cloathed it in his *Grounds of criticism*; it is part of the 18th *Psalms*.

*In my distress I call'd upon the Lord,
And to my God I cry'd; he from his height*

*Above all heights strait heard my mournful voice,
 And to my loud complaint inclin'd his ear.
 Strait the earth trembled, and her entrails shook,
 As conscious of her great creator's wrath.
 The mountains from their fix'd foundations ran,
 And, frighted, from their inmost caverns roar'd,
 From out his nostrils a tempestuous cloud
 Of pitchy smoke in spiry volumes flew;
 And from his mouth there ran a raging flood
 Of torrent fire, devouring as it ran.
 And then he bow'd the very heaven of heavens,
 And, arm'd with fearful majesty, came down.
 Under his feet he plac'd substantial night,
 Which aw'd the nations with its dreadful gloom.
 Upon the flaming cherubim he rode,
 And on the wings of all the winds he flew.
 Still darkness usher'd his mysterious way,
 And a black night of congregated clouds
 Became the dark pavilion of his throne.
 The clouds his brightness could no longer bear,
 But, vanishing, rever'd the sacred source of light;
 And as the congregated clouds dispers'd,
 A storm of monstrous hail came pouring down.
 Down the red lightning wing'd its slanting way.
 But when his wrathful voice was heard on high,
 Strait both the poles rebellow'd to the sound;
 In thicker sheets the rattling hail came down.
 Down came the lightning with repeated flames,
 And thunder, bellowing through the boundless space,
 Astonish'd nature with redoubled roars.
 Earth could no longer bear the mortal fright,
 But shook it self from its perpetual hinge*

At thy rebuke, O Lord, and at the blast,
 The dreadful blast of thy revenging breath ;
 Then upwards from the gaping center cleav'd,
 With a prodigious wound.
 The fix'd foundations of the world display'd,
 Display'd the ghastrful caverns of the deep ;
 A sight that blasted ev'n the world's great eye,
 And made the starting sun recoil
 From his eternal way.

Nothing can be more great, more lofty, and sublime, than this *Psalm* of *David*. I shall add another *Psalm* of a different nature, it is grave, but full of anguish, and the pathetic: It is a *Psalm* made during the captivity of *Judah*.

Psalm, CXXXVII.

By the waters of *Babylon* we sat down and wept, when we remembered thee, O *Sion*.

As for our harps, we hanged them up upon the trees that are therein.

For they that led us away captive required of us then a song and melody in our heaviness: Sing us one of the songs of *Sion*.

How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?

If I forget thee, O *Jerusalem*, let my right hand forget her cunning.

If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth: yea, if I prefer not *Jerusalem* in my mirth.

Remember the children of *Edom*, O Lord, in the day of *Jerusalem*: how they said, down with it, down with it, even to the ground.

O daughter of *Babylon*, wasted with misery: yea, happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us.

Blessed shall he be, that taketh thy children, and throweth them against the stones.

I have chosen to give two of these songs, which I have quoted from the *Hebrews*, in the diction of our translators of the bible, because it is more strong and close than any of those paraphrastic efforts in rhyme, which I have ever seen, of any of the poetic parts of the Old Testament. The public translators had only in their view the rendering the *Hebrew* text as fully and close as they possibly could, without endeavouring at the smooth and polish'd expression that should give their words a numerousness, and an agreeable sound to the ear. By this means they have retain'd a much more valuable quality, that is, the sense, the spirit, the elevation, and the divine force of the original; whereas those gentlemen, who have attempted any part of the Old Testament in rhyme, have either, by the natural effeminacy of those identical sounds which we call rhyme, or by a pursuit of a smooth and flowing versification, or by expressing paraphrastically what is said simply in the original, lost the force and energy of the divine song, in the weak ornaments of modern poetry; at least, this I can say for my self, that I never found my soul touch'd by the best of these performances (even from Cowley himself down to this day) tho' it has been scarce able to support the violent emotions, and excessive transports raised by the common translation.

If the reader has read my *Compleat art of poetry*, he will perhaps be surpriz'd to hear me attribute a defect to the use of rhyme in a translation from the *Hebrews*, in which language I may seem to have said,
rhime

rhime made a part of their versification. Perhaps I may have express'd my self with too little caution on this head in that place ; and therefore to rectify any mistake that may arise from thence, I must inform the reader, that I took the hint of *Hebrew* rhimes from a discourse of the learned *Mons. le Clerk*, in his commentaries upon the *Old Testament* ; but he does not positively assert that it is so, but only that he thinks he has found something like rhime, that is, a similitude of sounds, in some parts of some of the *Hebrew* poetry ; so that upon the whole matter it seems but a conjecture, a meer guess, which can afford no authority to the opinion.

But be this as it will in the *Hebrew*, it is certain that rhime in *English* is a softener, and never affords any force or energy to the lines where it is made use of ; I shall only give one instance in this place of this point.

Mr. *Dryden*, I think, will be acknowledg'd on all hands to be the greatest master of rhime that ever we had in *England* : But how weak, how enervate, I had almost said, how trifling, is his *State of innocence*, compar'd with what *Milton* has said upon the same subject in blank verse ? Indeed Mr. *Milton* and Mr. *Dennis* seem only to have entred into the spirit of the sacred writers, and for this reason I have put down that part of the 18th *Psalms*, not in the vulgar translation, but in Mr. *Dennis's* words, because they come nearer to the royal prophet's sense and genius. And this I think is sufficient to say upon the *Pindaric Ode*, where tho' my task properly ends, because the *Essay* goes no farther, I shall however presume to add a few lines upon the *Ode* in general, by which the reader

er may see what subjects may properly come into a lyric poem. I shall begin with *Horace*, as my lord Roscommon has translated him.

*Gods, heroes, conquerors, olympic crowns,
Love's pleasing cares, and the free joys of wine,
Are proper subjects for the Lyric song.*

To *Horace* I shall add *Monsieur Boileau*.

*The Ode is bolder, and has greater force :
Mounting to heaven in her ambitious flight,
Amongst the gods and heroes takes delight ;
Of Pisa's wrestlers tells the sinewy force,
And sings the dusty conqueror's glorious course ;
To Simois' streams does fierce Achilles bring,
And makes the Ganges bow to Britain's king.
Sometimes she flies, like an industrious bee,
And robs the flowers by nature's chymistry ;
Describes the shepherds dances, feasts, and blifs,
And boasts from Phillis to surprize a kiss ;
When gently she resists with feign'd remorse,
That what she grants may seem to be by force.
Her generous stile at random oft will part,
And by a brave disorder shows her art.*

Besides these quotations of *Horace* and *Boileau*, the reader may look back to what has been said upon songs ; because most, if not all of that, may be apply'd to what we call the lesser Ode.

Of all the ways that wisest men could find,
 To mend the age, and mortify mankind,
 Satire well-writ has most successful prov'd,
 And cures, because the remedy is lov'd.
 'Tis hard to write on such a subject more,
 Without repeating things said oft before.
 Some vulgar errors only we'll remove,
 That stain this beauty which we so much love.
 Of chosen words some take not care enough,
 And think they should be, as the subject, rough.
 This poem must be more exactly made,
 And sharpest thoughts in smoothest words con-
 [vey'd.

Some think, if sharp enough, they cannot fail,
 As if their only business was to rail.
 But human frailty nicely to unfold,
 Distinguishes a satyr from a scold.
 Rage you must hide, and prejudice lay down ;
 A satyr's smile is sharper than his frown.
*So while you seem to slight some rival youth,
 Malice itself may pass sometimes for truth.*

The

The (a) Laureat here may justly claim our praise,
Crown'd by (b) Mac-Fleckno with immortal
[bays,

Tho' prais'd and punish'd once for others (c) rhimes,
His own deserve as great applause sometimes ;
Yet Pegasus of late has borne dead weight,
Rid by some lumpish ministers of state.

I know it has been a dispute, whether the end and aim of poetry be to give pleasure only, or to convey to us likewise by that pleasure profitable instructions. But it is worth our observation, that this is a dispute almost entirely modern, and chiefly promoted by those weak writers, who wanted genius and judgment enough to mingle the *profitable with the pleasant* in their poetical performances, who, being conscious that they could produce nothing that was nobly instructive, and by consequence beneficial to mankind, join'd with the senseless vogue of a thoughtless generation, in establishing an opinion that profitable instruction was no part of the duty of a poet ; which was indeed to render the study, they had made choice of, so worthless and contemptible, that as it met with little encouragement, so it deserv'd less.

But

(a) Mr. Dryden.

(b) A famous satirical Poem of his.

(c) A copy of verses call'd, *An Essay on Satire* ; for which Mr. Dryden was both applauded and beaten, tho' not only innocent, but ignorant of the whole matter.

But this was not the opinion of the great men of antiquity, who, in all their poetical compositions, had the profitable so perpetually in their Eye, that it is plain that they study'd and arriv'd at that wonderful perfection in the *pleasant*, only to convey the more effectually to their readers the *profitable*; witness *Homer* in all he writ, witness the dramatic poets of *Greece*; witness *Virgil* and *Horace* among the *Romans*; the last of whom, besides his practice, has left it as a certain rule, that to obtain all the compleat beauties and perfections of poetry, the writer must join the *profitable* to the *pleasant*; and it was in consideration of the beneficial instructions that the poets of those days gave mankind, that they found that esteem and encouragement from the wisest states, and the most ingenious people that ever were in the world; for, indeed, if poetry could afford us nothing but pleasure, it could deserve no greater a regard than all other vain, tho' agreeable amusements.

I will not deny, but that if Poetry had no other view but only pleasure, it yet had some claim to our regard; because pleasure seems absolutely necessary to the support of the numerous inquietudes which replenish human life. But all the pleasure which a mere versification (and such is all poetry without the profitable) can afford, is too weak, and too trifling to be thought of any importance to human happiness; it may indeed tickle the Ear with a light and transitory diversion of numbers and diction, but it passes away in a moment, without touching the heart, the only source of great, true, noble, and lasting pleasure. And I must boldly assert, that it is impossible to touch the heart, that is, to engage the passions, by any verses
that

that are not exalted by the conveyance of the profitable.

This indeed is done more by some sorts of poetry than others ; and that sort which does it most, is the most excellent, because mankind derives the greatest benefit from it, in the regulation of their passions, refining their *manners*, and the discovery and correction of their follies and vices. Those parts of poetry which are principally concern'd in these particulars, are the *epic*, *dramatic*, and *satire* ; not but the profitable may be found in most of the other parts of poetry ; in some more, in some less, but in none so eminently as in the three we have just mention'd ; as we shall see in those considerations which I have to add upon them in the following part of these *commentaries*. I shall, in pursuance of the method of the noble author of the *Essay on Poetry*, speak first of *satire*.

It is plain from the first lines that his *Grace* delivers upon this head, that he is of opinion that *satire* puts in a very considerable claim to this excellence which I have been mentioning.

*Of all the ways that wisest men could find,
To mend the age, and mortify mankind,
Satire well-writ has most successful prov'd,
And cures, because the remedy is lov'd.*

This appears to me the most difficult part of the *Essay* to speak to with clearness and satisfaction, and this difficulty chiefly proceeds from the dubious meaning of the term *Satire* ; and before we can examine into the real merit of this sort of poem, and determine whether it deserves that high encomium which

which his *Grace* has been pleas'd to give it, of being the most successful in *mending the age, and mortifying mankind*, it is absolutely necessary to fix a true and adequate notion of *Satire* it self.

The words *Tragedy* and *Satire* have very much alter'd their signification in our modern times, and in this nation, to what it was among the ancients. Now, *tragedy* is taken to be something very cruel, bloody, and barbarous; but it had no such meaning in its first rise, nor in all the time of the *Greeks* and *Romans*, as I shall make out when I come to the consideration of that sort of poem. Thus *Satire* with us is taken to be something very malicious, sharp, and biting, something that consists wholly of invectives, and railing at particular persons; but in its original meaning among the *Romans*, where it had its first rise, it contained nothing of so virulent a nature; and this misunderstanding of the very name of the poem has with us made *lampoons*, or copies of verses stuf't with scurrillity and scandal, in the abuse of particulars, pass so currently for *Satire*, that the general readers have no other idea of that poem. A great deal of malice, and a little wit, without learning or any knowledge of humane nature, fine sense, or reflection, sets up a very indifferent scribbler for a great performer in this kind. But as this has little or no relation to that of the *Romans*, so has it not more claim to the advantages given it by those lines we have quoted from the *Essay on poetry*, as we shall see more fully in the sequel.

This being the false notion of *Satire*, and which contains nothing valuable or useful, it is plainly necessary that I here should fix a more just and true idea of it. But to do this with the greater certainty, it is
likewise

likewise necessary that we take a view of the rise of this poem among the *Romans*, as well as of the etymology of the word it self. And this I think I cannot do with more ease to my self, and more satisfaction to my reader, than from the preface of that great and judicious critic *Mons. Dacier*, before his notes to the *Satires* of *Horace* ; and which I publish'd about eight and twenty years ago in the *English* tongue, to which I shall add some few considerations of my own.

Horace intitles his two books of *Satires* indifferently *Sermones*, and *Satiræ* ; and since these two names give different ideas, for certain reasons it is necessary to explain what the *Latins* understood by the word *Satira*.

Satire is a kind of poesy only known to the *Romans*, being not at all related to the satirical poesy of the *Greeks*, as some learned men have pretended. *Quintilian* leaves us no doubt upon this point, when he writes in Chap. X, *Satira quidem tota nostra est*. The same reason makes *Horace* call it, in the last *Satire* of book 1, *Græcis intactum carmen*. The natural and true etymology is this: The *Latins* call'd it SATUR, *quasi plenum*, to which there was nothing wanting for its perfection. Thus *Satur Color*, when the wool has taken a good dye, and nothing could be added to the perfection of it. From *Satur* they have made *Satura*, which they wrote sometimes with an (i) *Satira* ; they used in other words the same variation of the letter u into i, as in *maxumus*, *maximus*, *optumus*, *optimus*. *Satura* is an adjective, which has reference to a substantive understood ; for the ancient *Romans* said *Saturam* understanding *Lancem* ; and *Satura Lanx* was properly a bason fill'd with all sorts of fruits, which they

they offer'd every year to *Ceres* and *Bacchus*, as the first fruits of all they had gathered.—The grammarian *Diomedes* has perfectly describ'd both the custom of the *Romans*, and the word *Satura*, in this passage: *Lanx referta variis multisque primitiis sacris Cereris inferebatur, & a copia & saturitate rei, satura vocabatur: cujus generis lancium & Virgilius in Georgicis meminit, cum hoc modo dicit,*

Lancibus & pandis fumantia reddimus exta.

And ——— *Lancesq; & liba feremus.*

From thence the word *Satura* was apply'd to many other mixtures, as in *Festus*, *Satira cibi genus ex variis rebus conditum*. From hence it pass'd to the works of the mind; for they call'd some laws *leges saturas*, which contain'd many heads or titles, as the *Julian*, *Papian*, and *Popean* laws, which were call'd *Miscellæ*, which is of the same signification with *Satura*. From hence arose this phrase, *Per Saturam legem ferre*, when the senate made a law, without gathering and counting the votes, in haste and confusedly all together, which was properly call'd *per Saturam sententias exquirere*, as *Sallust* has it after *Lelius*: But they rested not here, but gave this name to certain books, as *Pescennius Festus*, whose histories were call'd *Saturæ*, or *per Saturam*. From all these examples 'tis not hard to suppose that these works of *Horace* took from hence their name, and that they were call'd *Saturæ*, *quia multis & variis rebus hoc carmen refertum est*, because these poems are full of a great many different things, as *Porphyrus* says, which is partly true. But it must not be thought it is immediately from thence; for this name had been used before for other things which bore a nearer

resemblance to the *Satires* of *Horace*, in explanation of which a method is to be followed, which *Casaubon* himself never thought of, and which will put things in so clear a light, that there can be no place left for doubt.

The *Romans* having been almost four hundred years without any *scenical plays*, chance and debauchery made them find in one of their *feasts* the *Saturnian* and *Fescennine pieces* : But these verses were rude and almost without any numbers, as being made extempore, and by a people as yet but barbarous, who had little other skill but what flow'd from their joy and the fumes of wine. They were fill'd with the grossest sort of railleries, and attended with gestures and dances. To have a livelier idea of this, you need but reflect upon the honest peasants, whose clownish dances are attended with *extempore* verses, in which in a wretched manner they rally one another with all they know. To this *Horace* refers in the first epistle of his *second Book*,

*Fescennina per hunc inventa licentia morem
Versibus alternis opprobria rustica fudit.*

This licentious and irregular verse was succeeded by a sort more correct, fill'd with a pleasant raillery, without the mixture of any thing scurrilous ; and these obtain'd the name of *Satires*, by reason of their variety, and had regulated forms ; that is, regular dances and musick, but indecent postures were banish'd.

Titus Livius has it, in his seventh book, *Vernaculis artificibus, quia Hister Tusco verbo Ludio vocabatur, nomen histrionibus inditum, qui, non sicut ante, fescennino versu similem compositum temere ac rudem alternis jaciebant ; sed impletas modis Satyras, descripto jam ad tibicinem cantu, motusque*

mixtusque congruenti peragebant. These *Satires* were properly honest farces, in which the spectators and actors were rallied without distinction.

Livius Andronicus found things in this posture when he first undertook to make comedies and tragedies in imitation of the *Grecians*. This diversion appearing more noble and perfect, they run to it in multitudes, neglecting the *Satires* for some time, though they received them a little after; and some modell'd them into a purpos'd form to act at the end of their comedies, as the *French* act their farces now. And then they alter'd their name of *Satires* for that of *Exodia*, which they preserve to this day. This was the first and most ancient kind of *Roman Satire*: There are two other sorts, which, tho' very different from this first, yet both owe their birth to this, and are, as it were, branches of it. This I shall prove the most succinctly I can.

A year after *Livius Andronicus* had caused his first efforts to be acted, *Italy* gave birth to *Ennius*, who being grown up, and having all the leisure in the world to observe the eager satisfaction with which the *Romans* received the *Satires* of which I have already spoken, was of opinion, that poems, tho' not adapted to the theatre, yet preserving the gall, the railing and pleasantness which made these *Satires* take with so much applause, would not fail of being well receiv'd; he therefore ventur'd at it, and compos'd several discourses, to which he retain'd the name of *Satires*; the discourses were entirely like those of *Horace*, both for the matter and the variety. The only essential difference that is observable is, that *Ennius*, in imitation of some *Greeks*, and of *Homer* himself, took the liberty of mixing of several kinds of verses

together, as *Hexameters*, *Iambics*, *Trimeters*, with *Tetrameters*, *Trochaics*, or square verse, as it appears from the fragments which are left us.

Horace has borrowed several things from those *Satires*. After *Ennius* came *Pacuvius*, who also writ *Satires* in imitation of his uncle *Ennius*.

Lucilius was born in the time when *Pacuvius* was in most reputation. He also wrote *Satires*, but he gave them a new turn, and endeavour'd to imitate as near as he could the character of the old *Greek* comedy, of which he had but a very imperfect idea in the ancient *Roman Satire*, and such as one might find in a poem which nature alone had dictated, before the *Romans* had thought of imitating the *Grecians*, and enriching themselves with their spoils. 'Tis thus you must understand this passage of the first *Satire* of the second Book of *Horace*,

— Quid, cum est *Lucilius* ausus

Primus in hunc operis componere carmina morem?

Horace never intended by this to say that there were no *Satires* before *Lucilius*, because *Ennius* and *Pacuvius* were before him, whose example he followed: He only would have it understood that *Lucilius* having given a new turn to this poem, and embellish'd it, ought by way of excellence to be esteemed the first author. *Quintilian* had the same thought, when he writ in the first chapter of the 10th book, *Satira quidem tota nostra est, in qua primus insignem laudem adeptus est Lucilius*. You must not therefore be of the opinion of *Casaubon*, who, building on the judgment of *Diomedes*, thought that the *Satire* of *Ennius*, and that of *Lucilius*, were entirely different. These are the very words of

this

this *Grammarians*, which have deceived this judicious critic. *Satira est carmen apud Romanos, non quidem apud Græcos maledicum, ad carpenda hominum vitia, Archæ Comædiæ charactere compositum, quale scripserunt Lucilius & Horatius & Persius: sed olim carmen, quod ex variis Poematibus constabat, Satira dicebatur, quale scripserunt Pacuvius & Ennius.* You may see plainly that *Diomedes* distinguishes the *Satire* of *Lucilius* from that of *Ennius* and *Pacuvius*; the reason which he gives for this distinction is ridiculous, and absolutely false. The good man had not examin'd the nature and origin of these two *Satires*, which were entirely like one another, both in matter and form; for *Lucilius* added to it only a little politeness, and more salt, almost without changing any thing: And if he did not put together several sorts of verse in the same piece, as *Ennius* has done, yet he made several pieces, of which some were entirely *Hexameters*, others entirely *Iambics*, and others *Trochaics*, as is evident from his fragments. In short, if the *Satires* of *Lucilius* differ from these of *Ennius*, because the former has added much to the endeavours of the latter, as *Casaubon* has pretended, it will follow from thence, that those of *Horace* and those of *Lucilius* are also entirely different; for *Horace* has no less refin'd upon the *Satires* of *Lucilius*, than he on those of *Ennius* and *Pacuvius*. This passage of *Diomedes* has also deceived *Doussa* the son. I say not this to expose some light faults of these great men, but only to show with what exactness, and with what caution their works must be read, when they treat of any thing so obscure and so ancient.

I have made appear what was the ancient *Satire* that was made for the *theatre*; I have shown that that

gave the idea of the *Satire* of *Ennius*. And in fine, I have sufficiently prov'd that the *Satires* of *Ennius* and *Pacuvius*, of *Lucilius* and *Horace*, are but one kind of poem, which has received its perfection from the last. 'Tis time now to speak of the second kind of *Satire*, which I promised to explain, and which is also deriv'd from the ancient *Satire*; 'tis that which we call *Varro-nian*, or the *Satire* of *Menippus* the cynic philosopher.

This *Satire* was not only compos'd of several sorts of verse, but *Varro* added prose to it, and made a mixture of *Greek* and *Latin*. *Quintilian*, after he had spoke of the *Satire* of *Lucilius*, adds, *Alterum illud est & prius Satiræ genus, quod non sola carminum varietate mistum condidit Terentius Varro, vir Romanorum eruditissimus.*

The only difficulty of this passage is, that *Quintilian* assures us that this *Satire* of *Varro* was the first; for how could that be, since *Varro* was a great while after *Lucilius*? *Quintilian* meant not that the *Satire* of *Varro* was the first in order of time, for he knew well enough that in that respect he was the last: But he would give us to understand, that this kind of *Satire*, so mix'd, was more like the *Satire* of *Ennius* and *Pacuvius*, who gave themselves a greater liberty in this composition than *Lucilius*, who was more severe and correct.

We have now only some fragments left of the *Satire* of *Varro*, and those generally very imperfect; the titles, which are most commonly double, show the great variety of subjects of which *Varro* treated.

Seneca's book on the death of *Claudius*; *Boetius's* consolation of *philosophy*, and that of *Petronius Arbitr*, are *Satires* entirely like those of *Varro*.

This is what I have in general to say on *Satire*; nor is it necessary I insist any more on this subject.

This

This the reader may observe, that the name of *Satire* in *Latin* is not less proper for discourses that recommend virtue, than to those that are design'd against vice. It had nothing so formidable in it, as it has now; when a bare mention of *Satire* makes them tremble, who would fain seem what they are not; for *Satire* with us signifies the same thing as exposing or lashing of some thing or person; yet this different acceptation alters not the word, which is always the same; but the *Latins*, in the titles of their books, have often had regard only to the word, in the extent of its signification, founded on its etymology; whereas we have had respect only to the first and general use, which has been made of it in the beginning to mock and deride; yet this word ought always to be writ in *Latin* with an *u* or *i*, *Satura* or *Satira*. Those who wrote it with a *y* thought with *Scaliger*, *Heinsius*, and a great many others, that the divinities of the groves, which the *Grecians* call'd *Satyrs*, the *Romans* *Fawns*, gave their names to these pieces, and that of the word *Satyrus* they had made *Satyra*, and that these *Satires* had a great affinity with the *Satyric* pieces of the *Greeks*, which is absolutely false, as *Cassaubon* has very well prov'd it, in making it appear, that of the word *Satyrus*, they could never make *Satyra*, but *Satyrica*; and in showing the difference betwixt the *Satyric* poems of the *Greeks*, and the *Roman Satires*. Mr. *Spanheim*, in his fine preface to the *Cæsars*, concerning the emperor *Julian*, has added new reflections to those which this judicious *Critic* had advanc'd; and he has establish'd with a great deal of judgment five or six essential differences betwixt those two poems, which you may find in his

book. The *Greeks* had never any thing that came near this *Roman Satire*, but their *Silli*, which were also biting poems, as they may easily be perceived to be yet, by some fragments of the *Silli* of *Timon*. There was however this difference, that the *Silli* of the *Greeks* were *parodious* from one end to the other, which cannot be said of the *Roman Satires*, where if sometimes you find some *Parodia's*, you may plainly see that the poet did not design to affect it, and by consequence the *Parodia's* do not make the essence of a *Satire*, as they do the essence of the *Silli*.

Thus far the learned *Monf. Dacier*, who, in this part of his preface which I have quoted, has with a great deal of curiosity, clearness, and judgment, given us a view of *Satire* in its first appearance and rise, as well as in the etymology of the name; from whence it is plain, that it began with something of that biting spirit, which it has retain'd thro' all its changes, even to this day, and which only among us seems to have been taken for *Satire*. Nay, we are so far fallen from the original meaning of the word, and the nature and composition of the poem, that we generally, at least, call a personal invective, and even a downright lampoon, by the name of *Satire*; but that the *Romans* meant no such thing by it, is plain, not only from what *Monf. Dacier* here has said, and the *Satires* of *Horace*, *Perfius*, and *Juvenal*, but also by this following consideration: *Quintilian*, we find, by the foregoing preface, tells us, that *Satire* is wholly *Roman*, or entirely of *Roman* invention, which is confirm'd, we see, by *Horace*, when he calls it *Gracis intactum Carmen*, or a sort of verse not touch'd on by the *Greeks*. But if either *Quintilian* or *Horace* had taken

Satire

Satire in the sense that we do now, that is, of being a biting and personally invective poem only, they could neither of them have asserted any such thing, since it is very well known that the *Iambic* poems of the *Greeks* were entirely invectives, and *Archilocus* is mentioned by *Horace* himself, in his *art of poetry*, as the inventor of that sort of verse ; nay, it is remarkable, and what I have not found by any one else, that *Horace*, when he writ a personal invective, writ it in *Iambics*, and calls such writings *Iambics*, and not *Satires*, as is plain from the sixteenth *Ode* of the first book, which he directs to a young lady whom he had abused in *Iambics*. It begins thus :

*O matre pulchra filia pulchrior,
Quem criminosis cunque voles modum
Pones Iambis : Sive flamma,
Sive mari libet Adriano.*

Then as for the biting quality, which was found in the first original *Satire* of the *Romans*, that could not be said to be *Græcis intactum Carmen*, since the railleries of the country villagers at one another, in their drunken festivals in *Greece*, gave rise to comedy, as the same sorts of railleries in *Rome* did to the first *Satire*, which was there a sort of dramatic entertainment, as is plain from what we have quoted from *Mons. Dacier* : It being thus evident that the *Romans* could not claim the invention of *Satire* to themselves, by its being a biting and invective poem, it is equally evident that the *Romans* deriv'd their right to it from that variety or medley of subjects which they contain'd, as is express'd by the very word it self, *Satura*, *Satira* ; the
biting

biting quality being but one part of the whole, and which, in my opinion, never descended to particular persons, unless those particular persons happen'd to be so eminent for their vices or follies, that their characters became general, and made them a sort of public persons, and so capable of giving a public lesson. Nay, I think I may farther say, that the invective quality, tho' against vices and follies, and not men, might perhaps be sometimes but faintly touch'd, if not entirely omitted; since the recommendation of virtue was not less the business of ancient *Satire*, than the lashing of vice and folly, as I believe what follows of this preface of Mons. *Dacier* will sufficiently make out.

Having explain'd the nature, origin, and progress of *Satire*, I'll now say a word or two of *Horace* in particular.

There cannot be a more just idea given of this part of his works, than in comparing them to the statues of the *Sileni*, to which *Alcibiades*, in the banquet, compares *Socrates*: They were figures, that without had nothing agreeable or beautiful; but when you took the pains to open them, you found the figures of all the gods. In the manner that *Horace* presents himself to us in his *Satires*, we discover nothing of him at first, that deserves our attachment. He seems to be fitter to amuse children, than to employ the thoughts of men; but when we remove that which hides him from our eyes, and view him even to the bottom, we find in him all the gods together: that is to say, all those virtues which ought to be the continual practice of such as seriously endeavour to forsake their vices.

Hitherto

Hitherto we have been content to see only his outside ; and 'tis a strange thing, that *Satires*, which have been read so long, have been so little understood, or explain'd. They have made a halt at the outside, and were wholly busied in giving the interpretation of words : they have commented upon him like *grammarians*, not philosophers ; as if *Horace* had writ meerly to have his language understood, and rather to divert than instruct us : that is not the end of this work of his. The end of any discourse, is the action for which that discourse is compos'd ; when it produces no action, it is only a vain amusement, which idly tickles the ear, without ever reaching the heart.

In these two books of his *Satires*, *Horace* would teach us, to conquer vices, to rule our passions, to follow nature, to limit our desires, to distinguish true from false, and ideas from things ; to forsake prejudice, to know thoroughly the principles and motives of all our actions, and to shun that folly which is in all men, who are bigotted to the opinions they have imbibed under their teachers, which they keep obstinately, without examining whether they are well grounded. In a word, he endeavours to make us happy for our selves, agreeable and faithful to our friends, easy, discreet, and honest to all with whom we are obliged to live.

To make us understand the terms he uses, to explain the figures he employs, and to conduct the reader safely through the labyrinth of a difficult expression, or obscure parenthesis, is no great matter to perform : and as *Epictetus* says, there is nothing in that beautiful, or truly worthy a wise man ; the principal and most important business is to show the rise, the reason, and the proof of his precepts ; to demonstrate, that those who do not endeavour to correct themselves

selves by so beautiful a model, are just like sick men, who having a book full of receipts proper to their distempers, content themselves to read them, without comprehending them, or so much as knowing the advantage of them.

I urge not this, because I have my self omitted any thing in these annotations, which was the incumbent duty of a grammarian to observe: This I hope the world will be sensible of, and that there remains no more difficulty in the text: but that which has been my chief care, is to give an insight into the very matter that *Horace* treats of, to show the solidity of his reasons, to discover the turns he makes use of to prove what he aims at, and to refute or illude that which is oppos'd to him; to confirm the truth of his decisions, to make the delicacy of his sentiments perceiv'd, to expose to open day the folly he finds in what he condemns; this is what none have done before me. On the contrary, as *Horace* is a true *Proteus*, that takes a thousand different forms, they have often lost him, and not knowing where to find him, have grappled him as well as they could; they have palm'd upon him in several places not only opinions which he had not, but even those which he directly refutes. I don't say this, to blame those who have taken pains before me on the works of this great Poet; I commend their endeavours, they have open'd me the way; and if it be granted, that I have some little advantage over them, I owe it wholly to the great men of antiquity, whom I have read with more care, and, without doubt, with more leisure: I speak of *Homer*, of *Plato*, and *Aristotle*, and of some other *Greek* and *Latin* authors, which I study continually,

that

that I may form my taste on theirs, and draw out of their writings the justness of wit, good sense, and reason.

I know very well, that there are now adays some authors, who laugh at these *great names*, who disallow the acclamations which they have received from all ages, and who would deprive them of the crowns which they have so well deserved, and which they have got before such august tribunals : but for fear of falling into admiration, (which they look upon as the child of ignorance) they do not perceive, that they go from that admiration which *Plato* calls the mother of wisdom, and which was the first that open'd mens eyes. I do not wonder, that the celestial beauties, which we find in the writings of these incomparable men, lose with them all their attractives and charms, because they have not the strength to keep their eyes long enough upon them. Besides, it is much easier to despise, than understand them. As for my self, I declare, that I am full of admiration, and veneration for their divine genius's ; I have them always before my eyes as venerable and incorruptible judges, before whom I take pleasure to fancy, that I ought to give an account of my writings. At the same time I have a great respect for posterity, and I always think with more fear, than confidence, on the judgment that will pass on my works, if they are happy enough to reach it ; all this does not hinder me from esteeming the great men that live now. I acknowledge, that there are a great many who are an honour to our age, and who would have adorn'd the ages past : but among these great men I speak of, I do not know one, and there cannot be one, who does not esteem and
honour

honour the ancients, who is not of their taste, and who follows not their rules : if you go never so little from them, you go at the same time from nature and truth ; and I shall not be afraid to affirm, that it would not be more difficult to see without eyes, or light, than 'tis impossible to acquire a solid merit, and to form the understanding, by other means than by these that the *Greeks* and *Romans* have traced for us : whether it be, that we follow them by the only force of natural happiness, or instinct ; or that art and study have conducted us thither. As for those who thus blame antiquity, without knowing it, once for all I will undeceive them, and make it appear, that in giving all the advantage to our age, they take the direct course to dishonour it : for what greater proofs can be of the rudeness, or rather barbarity of an age, than in it to hear *Homer* call'd dull and heavy ; *Plato* tiresome and tedious ; *Aristotle* ignorant ; *Demosthenes* and *Cicero*, vulgar orators ; *Virgil*, a poet without either grace or beauty ; and *Horace*, an author unpolish'd, languid, and without force ? The Barbarians, who ravaged *Greece* and *Italy*, and who labour'd with so much fury to destroy all things that were fine and noble, have never done any thing so horrible as this. But I hope, that the false taste of some particular men, without authority, will not be imputed to the whole age, nor give the least blemish to the ancients. 'Twas to no purpose, that a certain emperor declar'd himself an enemy to *Homer*, *Virgil*, and *Titus Livius* : all his efforts were ineffectual, and the opposition he made to works so perfect, serv'd only to augment in history the number of his follies, and render him more odious to all posterity.

Tho'

Tho' the latter part of this last quotation may not seem of much consequence, either to *Satire* in general, or to *Horace* in particular; yet since I shall have occasion, before I finish these *commentaries*, to refer to what *Monf. Dacier* has said here in the praise of the ancients, I have chosen rather to put it down with the context, than hereafter to bring it in as a detach'd quotation by itself.

Having thus had a full view of the *Satire* of the *Romans*, and particularly of that of *Horace*, the prince of the *Roman satirists*, I think we may conclude, that the ancient *Satire* can only put in a just claim to that praise, and excellence, which is given to *Satire* by the noble author of the *Essay*; and by consequence, that it is the ancient *Satire*, and not the modern, that our illustrious author had in his eye, when he writ these lines :

*Of all the ways that wisest men could find,
To mend the age, and mortify mankind,
Satire, well-writ, has most successful prov'd,
And cures, because the remedy is lov'd.*

And the very words of the *Essay* confirm me in this opinion: for first, the invention of meer invectives, meer personal abuse, was not deriv'd from the wise men of any age; but from the madness and revenge of *Archilocus*, or at best, from the railleries of the country people, not very eminent for wisdom, and the old comedy built upon it: the licentious abuse of which, and bitter personal reflections, were restrain'd, and indeed extinguish'd by the wisdom of the *Athenian* state, and the personal invectives of the stage

stage usefully chang'd into general reflections on vice. The abuse of particulars could only mortify particulars; and, not giving any general lesson, could not administer a general cure; and therefore from the advantages that the *Essay* gives to *Satire*, it is plain, that it must be the ancient, not modern *Satire* that is meant. But what puts this beyond all controversy, is this line of the *Essay*;

But human frailty nicely to unfold.

Here his *Grace* expressly tells us, that the subject of *Satire* is *human frailty* in general; that is, the vices and follies of human kind, and not the secret defects of any one particular.

But being willing to allow as much as ever I can to the performance of some ingenious men in this modern way, I will not wholly deny all manner of excellence to the personally invective *Satires*; but then they must have this certain condition, that the crimes and follies they charge any one with, must not only be absolutely true, but known to the public, and prejudicial to others, as well as ignominious to themselves; otherwise it is all libel, and what we call scandal, a task very unfit for a gentleman, or a man of probity.

And cures, because the remedy is lov'd.

There is something in the best, that is, the ancient *Satire*, which either seriously bites, or pleasantly ridicules the folly or vice which it attacks; either, or both

both of which are agreeable to most men, and that it is which makes the remedy belov'd.

Having gone through all these particulars, I have only to add upon this subject, that the noble author of the *Essay* takes a peculiar care (as he has done on all other subjects of which he treats) not to burthen you with old rules, and tell you over and over again what has been said a thousand times before; but gives you some new rules, even of greater importance than the old, for the arriving at perfection in those several parts of poetry which he has been pleas'd to touch upon.

Of this nature are the following precepts which his *Grace* has given us about *satire*.

*Of chosen words some take not care enough,
And think they should be, as the subject, rough:
This poem must be more exactly made,
And sharpest thoughts in smoothest words convey'd:
Some think, if sharp enough, they cannot fail;
As if their only business was to rail.
But human frailty nicely to unfold;
Distinguishes a satyr from a scold.
Rage you must hide, and prejudice lay down;
A satyr's smile is sharper than his frown.
So, while you seem to slight some rival youth;
Malice itself may sometimes pass for truth.*

Here rest, my muse; suspend thy cares a-
while,

A more important task attends thy toil.

L

As

'As some young eagle, that designs to fly
 'A long unwonted journey through the sky,
 'Weighs all the dang'rous enterprize before,
 'Over what lands and seas she is to soar,
 'Doubts her own strength so far, and justly fears
 'That lofty road of airy travellers;
 'But yet, incited by some bold design,
 'That does her hopes beyond her fears incline;
 'Prunes every feather, views her self with care;
 'At last, resolv'd, she flounces in the air;
 'Away she flies, so strong, so high, so fast,
 'She lessens to us, and is lost at last.
 'So (but too weak for such a weighty thing)
 'The muse inspires a sharper note to sing.
 'And why should truth offend, when only told,
 'To guide the ignorant, and warn the bold?
 'On then, my muse, adventrously engage
 'To give instructions, that concern the stage.

The illustrious author of the *Essay* having endeavoured, by several valuable, curious, and happy remarks, to reform, and exalt, the taste of his reader, in those parts of poetry which he has already touch'd upon,

upon, makes an agreeable and judicious transition, by a beautiful simile, to those parts of poetry which are of greater importance, that is, to the *drama*, *epœia*, or heroic poem. But first of the *drama*, where we shall find the same admirable method pursu'd, which he has observ'd in all that he has already deliver'd, which is, of touching but lightly, if at all, on the common and known rules; but by laying down new precepts, that are not to be found in *Aristotle*, and his commentators, tho' of equal evidence and importance, and without which the excellent rules of *Aristotle* himself appear defective, at least insufficient, to preserve the author from those less obvious faults which have been found in our *English* writers of *Tragedy*, who have been guilty not only of a breach of almost all the rules of *Aristotle*, but even of those of common sense; as will appear from the admirable remarks of our illustrious author, which he delivers here on this head.

By what I have here said, I hope I shall not be so monstrously mistaken by my reader, as to appear to sacrifice to the author under my consideration, at the expence of *Aristotle*, and that sovereign reputation which his criticisms have justly acquir'd among the knowing and judicious of all nations and ages. If the reader will remember what my lord duke has said on this head, he will frankly acquit me; and these are my lord's words:

*Yet modern laws are made for later faults,
And new absurdities inspire new thoughts.*

And the new absurdities mention'd are so odd, so fantastic, and so much out of the way in the *drama*, that 'tis no wonder they came not under the consideration of *Aristotle*.

The *Athenian* poets, tho' not without their defects, were men of too fine reason, and too much judgment, to be guilty of any thing like them, and therefore could not furnish *Aristotle* with such faults as are taken notice of by the *Essay* in our modern poets; to supply which defect, the *Essay* may be justly look'd on as a necessary supplement to the *Stagyrite*; for even those precepts, that may seem to have a distant dependance upon *Aristotle*, are the best and most useful comments on his most necessary parts; as we shall see when we come to the consideration of them.

It is plain from this fine transition of the *Essay*, from the other sorts of poetry to the *drama*, that the illustrious author has a much more lofty idea of *Tragedy*, and the *Epopœia*, than of all those parts of poetry of which he had hitherto treated, and that with a great deal of justice; for I think we may say, without the fear of incurring a *catachresis*, or harsh metaphor, that most of the kinds of poems, already mention'd, are a sort of what the painters call *Still-life*; or at most landscape, or a draught of the brute creation; whereas *Tragedy* draws mankind, and may be call'd the history-painting of poetry. I except here all manner of divine poems; and if the reader desire it, I will give him in all those other poems which contain a description, or effects, of any of the human passions. But still, these descriptions and effects are but a sort of *Face-painting*, that reaches but some particular part of the human creature; but *Tragedy* gives
you

you man at his full length, attended with all his variety of passions, habits of mind, and their events.

As the object of *Tragedy* is more extensive and excellent than that of any other poem; so are the lessons taught by it of more general use and importance.

I speak not here of modern *Tragedy*, I speak not here of the fantastic gallimaufry, that on the *English* stage has for the most part usurpt that name, boasted that glory, to which in the hands even of *Shakespear* himself it has but very little pretence: But I speak of that excellent and rational poem call'd *Tragedy* by *Aristotle*, and the ancient *Athenians*, several of which we have still extant among us; and one only of them I shall instance in this discourse to prove my assertion, and that because it is already translated into the *English* tongue, not doubting but that it will plainly appear from a fair comparison betwixt it, and most of our most celebrated *Tragedies*, how far the *Athenian* stage, in this particular, excell'd the *English*, especially in its usefulness.

The aim and business of the *Greek Tragedy* was, by some fable or other, to teach and inculcate some one moral maxim; which it did, by the lively representation of the passions of such dramatic persons as were absolutely necessary to the forming, or composition, of such fable as the poet had made choice of, to produce that doctrine which he design'd to recommend by the fable he had chosen.

As this fable was comprehended in the representation of one action only, so was that action of such a kind, as to move either *terror* or *compassion* by those two predominant passions of human kind. The *Greek*

Poets, at the same time that they taught their moral lesson, endeavour'd to refine not only *fear* and *pity*, but all the other perturbations of the human soul.

To attain this end, it was their incumbent duty to make choice of such characters as were possess'd with passions, or manners, naturally productive of these important ends, which they propos'd in their writing.

But since I shall be oblig'd, in my observations on some part of the following *Essay*, to speak more particularly of the *dramatic* characters, I shall say no more of them in this place; nor indeed can I say any thing new upon the excellence of teaching by way of fable, since both my self and others have often urg'd, that it was a method made use of not only by the wisest men of antiquity among the *Grecians*, but also by the greatest of the *Hebrew* prophets, and even by our blessed Saviour himself; for such are all the parables he gives us in the New Testament.

The old *Tragedy* has not only this in common with the prophets, &c. but seems by its very design to promote the same end, or at least pursue the same doctrine that is taught us in the gospel itself, where the passions, or at least their criminal effects, are prevented in their very first approaches, *Whoever looks on a woman, so as to desire her, is guilty of adultery*: which teaches us to set a guard even on our eyes, since by those that crime enters, and possesses the heart, and soon reduces to action those guilty desires that were not check'd in their first appearance.

In the same manner the old *Tragedy* taught us not to yield to the very first onsets of our passions, since by

by yielding to those first onsets we incurr'd those crimes for which *Tragedy* punish'd us.

Principiis obsta: sero medicina paratur,

Cum mala per longas invaluere moras.

We must resist our passions in their very rise and beginning, else we in vain endeavour after a remedy for them, when they have once got the mastery of our souls.

These were the important lessons taught by the old *Athenian Tragedy*; this was the cause, that the wise magistrates gave such vast encouragement to this poem both in its writers and actors; for this reason, they laid out more money on the stage than in all their *Persian* wars. This is confess'd on all hands, tho' most people have been mistaken, in supposing that this great expence was occasion'd by the decorations of the *Theatre*; for tho' those were very magnificent, yet the *Athenians* knowing nothing of change of scenes, those could never amount to such immense sums. *Plutarch*, in a fragment of his *Symposiacs*, puts this matter out of question, where he seems to make complaint, that while the *Athenians* were so expensive in their entertainment of the actors, they were parsimonious enough in the allowances they made to *Nicias* their general, for the *Sicilian* expedition, in his equipage, and what was else necessary for his voyage and command. But this I have touch'd upon before; to which we may add the noble and generous rewards they gave the poets, making *Sophocles*, in particular, governor of the isle of *Samos*, on his writing *Antigone*,

notwithstanding the great price they paid him before it was acted.

But besides the public expence upon this useful poem, the greatest men of *Athens* oftentimes gave the *Chorus*; and the great *Themistocles* himself thought it worthy of him to be *Choragus*.

All this expence was laid out upon the natives themselves, no foreigner being admitted upon the *Athenian* stage; nay, there was a certain fine, by law, fix'd upon those who should employ any foreigner even to sing in the *Odeum*, or music-room, which fine *Demades* the orator paid, before he could have those foreigners perform in a musical entertainment which he gave to the people. But this *Demades* was a man of a profligate character, who having got great riches took this way to show it to his countrymen; tho' he might have been ashamed of the manner in which he got most of them, having been a pensioner to the king of *Macedon*, by whom he was at last put to death as a traitor: But this was after the death of *Alexander* the Great, when the *Athenians* had admitted of innovations, and lost much of their virtue, by that awe they were kept under by the kings of *Macedon*, *Epirus*, and others of *Alexander's* successors, as each prevail'd.

Before I come to the consideration of the modern *Tragedy*, I shall, *en passant*, take notice of a mistake in some learned men, about the antiquity of the poem of that name, being misled by the term. That there was such a poem as was call'd *Tragedy*, before the time of *Thespis*, is certain; and that not only in *Athens*, but in *Lacedemon*, and other parts of *Greece*, where the religious *Goat-Song* was perform'd at the end of their vintages,

tages, in honour of *Bacchus*, in which the victor was rewarded with a *Goat*, from whence came the name of *Tragedy*. But I can find no ground in reason, or rather history, to exclude *Thespis* from the honour of the first rude draught of future *Tragedy*, which join'd one principal actor to the *Chorus*, or ancient *Goat-Song*; which name it retain'd even when its whole form was alter'd.

I know that in that laborious collection made by *Grævius*, there is a discourse upon the *Theatre*, which makes *Tragedy* much ancients; but it seems to me to be founded upon the mistake which I have taken notice of.

After the first rude *Tragedy* of *Thespis* had been frequented for above threescore years, some say much longer, *Æschylus* brought it into greater form and regularity; into such form and regularity, that the magistrates considering it, and those uses and benefits it might bring to the public, took it immediately into their own management, and soon brought it, by that means, to the perfection in which *Sophocles*, *Euripides*, and other great poets of those times, left it; and I think I may say, that it has not receiv'd any considerable improvement since.

Having said so much of the ancient *Tragedy*, it is time now to turn our eyes to that which amongst us has generally usurp'd that name; *that Name*, I say, for it has nothing of the Thing. It is commonly a company of independent dialogues tack'd together, without any just coherence, and without being directed to any certain end, which makes it very often happen, that any part of it may be left out, and yet the entertainment remain as entire as if it had
not

not been so; nay, sometimes you may leave out the principal character, from which the play receives its name, without making any gap in the contexture; and this is evidently plain in that celebrated *Tragedy* call'd *Tamerlain*. Sometimes the whole is so wisely contriv'd, that the *beginning* may be the *middle*, and the *middle* the *beginning*; nothing in the play challenging the place in which it is, but the writer's will and pleasure.

Mr. *Dryden*, in his preface to *du Fresnoy*, acknowledges this to be true in one Play which he names. His words are these: *I remember only one Play, and for once I will call it by its name, THE SLIGHTED MAID, where there is nothing in the first Act but what might have been said or done in the fifth; nor any thing in the midst, which might not have been plac'd as well in the beginning or the end.*

Tho' Mr. *Dryden* remembers but one; yet I dare assert, that there are very few that do not fall under this censure in all but the very *catastrophe*, or death of the principal persons, especially in those which have met with no small success, and brought their authors very considerable profits within these ten years. But besides this, our *English Tragedies*, I speak of most, not all of them, labour with a number of other absurdities, a draught of which is given us very beautifully in the *Essay* under our present consideration.

But, since the poets, we of late have known,
Shine in no dress so much as in their own;

The

The better by example to convince;
 Cast but a view on this wrong-side of sense.
 First, a soliloquy is calmly made,
 Where every reason is exactly weigh'd;
 Which once perform'd, most opportunely comes
 Some Hero frightened at the noise of drums.

For her sweet sake, whom at first sight he loves;
 And all in metaphor his passion proves:
 But some sad accident, tho' yet unknown,
 Parting this pair, to leave the swain alone,
 He streight grows jealous, tho' we know not
 why;

Then, to oblige his rival, needs will die.
 But first he makes a speech, wherein he tells
 The absent nymph, how much his flame excels;
 And yet bequeaths her generously now
 To that lov'd man, (whom yet he scarce does
 know,)

Who streight appears (but who can fate with-
 stand?)

Too late, alas, to hold his hasty hand,
 That just has given himself the cruel stroke;
 At which his very rival's heart is broke;

Who

Who more to his new friend, than mistress kind,
Most sadly mourns at being left behind ;
Of such a death prefers the pleasing charms
To love and living in his lady's arms.

How shameful, and what monstrous things
are these ?

And then they rail at those they cannot please ;
Conclude us only partial for the dead,
And grudge the sign of old *Ben Johnson's* head,
When the intrinsic value of the stage
Can scarce be judg'd, but by a following age,
For Dances, Flutes, *Italian* Songs, and Rhime,
May keep up sinking Nonsense for a time :
But that will fail, which now so much o'er-
rules,
And sense no longer may submit to fools.

Tho' the favourers of the *English Tragedy* may pretend, that these reflections reach only some few of obscure reputation ; yet it is certain, that no man, who is acquainted with the taking *Tragedies* of the greatest part of the reign of king *Charles* the second, but does know, that these reflections are grounded upon plays that were far from being obscure in those days ; for a corroborating proof of which, I shall instance the *Rehearsal*, which is wholly compos'd of the monstrous absurdities which then reign'd on the *English stage*,
and

and were applauded by the *vogue-makers* of that time as excellencies. To these I shall add Mr. Rymer's view of the *Tragedies* of the last age, where he proves, even according to Mr. Dryden's concession, what fantastical and ridiculous pieces those were, which even to our days bear the name of the best *Tragic* performances in our language, I mean, *The Maid's Tragedy*; *King, and no King*; *Rollo, Duke of Normandy*; and the rest. Tho' Mr. Dryden owns, that all, or most of the faults Mr. Rymer has found, are just; yet he adds this odd reflection (as I have elsewhere observ'd:) *And yet, says he, Who minds the Critic, and who admires Shakespear less?* that was as much as to say, "Mr. Rymer has indeed made good his charge, and yet the town admir'd the poet's errors still"; which I take to be a greater proof of the folly, and abandon'd taste of the town, than of any imperfections in the critic, since the charge Mr. Rymer brings against these plays is, that they have no *Fable*, and by consequence can give no instruction; that their *manners* and *sentiments*, to say nothing of the *diction*, are every where defective, nay unnatural, and therefore can give no rational or useful pleasure.

There is another sort of dramatic entertainments upon the *English* stage, call'd *Historical Plays*, in which tho' *Shakespear* be the principal, yet almost all the old *English* Plays are of the same kind; and indeed, tho' the title of *Historical Plays* be only given by the editors of his works to his lives of *King John*; *Richard the second*; *Henry the fourth, fifth, and sixth*; *Richard the third*; and, *Henry the eighth*; yet almost all his other Plays may properly be call'd *Historical*; for tho' they are not all the entire lives of particular persons,

sons, yet they contain, generally speaking (for I think there is one or two exceptions,) the historical transactions of several years, as the *Julius Caesar* for example, in which we find not only the conspiracy against him, but all that happen'd afterwards in the *Roman* state to the death of *Brutus* and *Cassius*; and indeed he might have continued it, with the same reason, down to the expiration of the *Roman* empire under *Augustulus*; nay, when his hand was in, he might have gone on to his own time.

In a conversation betwixt *Shakespear* and *Ben Johnson*, *Ben* ask'd him the reason "why he wrote those "historical Plays." He reply'd, "That finding the "people generally very ignorant of history, he writ "them in order to instruct them in that particular."

A very poor and mean undertaking for a great poet, which not only afforded little or no improvement of the lives and manners of men, but could by no means obtain the very end he propos'd; since the representing of a few events found in history could never make them historians, the writing the histories themselves being only capable of that, which, when obtain'd, would make the general readers or hearers little the wiser, and not at all better men; nay, he has in some particulars, if not falsify'd, yet at least not justly represented the characters he has made use of, as history represents them; particularly in *Richard* the second, who, as we find him in history, was the most abandon'd tyrant that ever sat upon the *English* throne, guilty of the most barbarous oppressions, most servilely fearful in adversity, and most intolerably insolent when the danger was either remov'd, or at some distance; and I can see no reason, why he made choice
of

of the most despicable character of all our kings, unless it was for the sake of two or three fine descriptions, and some agreeable topics, or common places, in which some of our modern *Play-wrights* have endeavour'd to imitate him; for having got together two or three descriptions, no matter of what, or whether to any purpose, or not, these they tack together with some odd incoherent scenes, which are directed to no certain end, and can therefore be of no use.

But say the fautors of our stage, these pieces give pleasure, which is one considerable end of all poetry. But I must reply, that the pleasure they give is but mean, poor, and lifeless, and infinitely short of that transporting delight which a just and regular *Tragedy*, written according to art, excites in the soul, at the same time that it conveys lessons of the highest importance to human life.

A *Jack-pudding* upon a mountebank's stage gives pleasure to the rabble that listen to him, and perhaps more than the immortal *Ben Johnson*, by his admirable *Comedies*, from the stage of the *theatre*; yet certainly these gentlemen will not have the assurance to put *Ben Johnson* and *Jack-pudding* on a foot: It is not therefore sufficient merely to give pleasure, unless that pleasure be likewise rational, which is always, as I have formerly taken notice, join'd with the profitable. The *Tragedies*, I speak in general, of our stage, as it is evident from what has been said, convey nothing profitable to the hearer, teach us no lesson of any manner of consequence, and therefore give no pleasure, but what is weak, enervate, insipid, and what a man of sense and judgment ought to be asham'd of. On the

the other hand, the older *Greek Tragedy* is never without its moral, and always teaches some lesson beneficial to human life and happiness. Thus in the *OEdipus* of *Sophocles*, as it is translated, we find this moral.

Thebans, behold this *OEdipus*, whose name
Once glorious was, the darling theme of fame;
Who the dark riddles of dire *Sphynx* explain'd;
And the decreed reward of empire gain'd;
Who of desert, and regal honours proud,
Look'd down on fortune, and th' ignoble crowd;
'Till the rough tempest of unsteady fate
Rush'd on his grandeur, and o'erwhelm'd his state.
Taught by the change, let no rash man depend
On fortune's present smiles, but mark his end:
How'er renown'd, we none must happy rate,
'Till death secures 'em from th' insults of Fate.

There is almost the same thing urg'd in the *Chorus* of the fourth *Act*, which, because it is not long, I will likewise transcribe.

Frail state of man! thy living lot I deem
Like nothing, or a shadow's dream.
He who to fortune spreads his sails;
And swells with her successful gales;
Who in opinion grown is great;
Soon is becalm'd, and drops from all his state!
From thy example, king, from thy success;
And the strange vicissitude
Of all'ring time, I must conclude,
Fate ne'er sincerely did a mortal bless.

How

How the busy voice of fame

Did thy wond'rous worth proclaim!

How blest! how mighty! when thy skill

Did the voracious Monster-virgin kill!

When from the ravager thou Thebes didst free,

Fortune smil'd, and honour woo'd thee,

Glad supremacy pursu'd thee,

Purple pomp and royalty!

But who more wretched in thy present state,

Who more o'erwhelm'd in a tempestuous fate?

Spent and o'er-labour'd with inherent woe?

Oh! OEdipus! how great, how blest but now?

But incest and pollution bear thee down:

The nuptial bed, that held the father and the son!

How could the injur'd bed so long

In silence bear the father's wrong?

All-seeing time the latent guilt reveals,

And the unlicenc'd match repeals.

At once an husband, and a son;

Nature condemns the complicated one:

Offspring of Laius, would these eyes

Had never seen thy miseries;

To thy distress these plaints I owe,

And gushing tears unbidden flow.

Once I thy glories view'd with glad surprize;

Now, startled at thy shame, I downwards turn my eyes.

I dare appeal to the most rational enemies of the ancients; if they have any that are rational, to show me any thing like this in our modern *Tragedies*, four or five only excepted.

M

From

From hence it is plain, that the moral or lesson of this *Tragedy* of *OEdipus* is to show the frailty and uncertainty of all human grandeur, the fickleness and vicissitude of the smiles of fortune, in which therefore there is no trust to be put. Fortune had given success to *OEdipus*, confer'd on him a crown, made him lov'd and rever'd by his subjects, and supply'd him with all those advantages of prosperity that any one could wish or desire, and yet in a few hours tumbles him down into the abyss of misery, into wretchedness greater than ever man besides experienc'd. But how was all this done? how was it brought about? why, by his own vices and follies; by his curiosity, his rashness and choler, join'd with the utmost obstinacy. His curiosity drove him on to enquire after his birth; his pride and choler made him kill his father the very day that he had been told by the *Oracle* that he should murder him that begat him. 'Tis true, he did not know that it was his father; but he knew that he ought not to kill any man, especially on such trifles.

The death of *Laius* made way for his marrying his mother, which, when discover'd, and join'd to the former, render'd him compleatly unhappy. It was not his killing his father, nor his incest with his mother, in both which he might plead ignorance, that brought him to misery. It was that rashness and curiosity which gave rise to his former crimes, that threw him from all his happiness; and it was his rashness and curiosity which the poet punishes here, by a discovery of the crimes of which he had till then been ignorant: For had he stop't his enquiry after his doubted birth, on the prayers of *Jocasta*, he might have

have been much less wretched, if not as happy as before; the poet therefore in this *Tragedy* does not only teach us the former lesson mention'd, but likewise to correct our pride, choler, rashness, and curiosity, the common sources of many mischiefs to human kind.

But this is not all that *Sophocles* instructs us in by this *Tragedy* of *OEdipus*; there remains still a very important lesson, and that regards religion, and the honour of the gods; in which the veracity of the prophets, and the oracles, was immediately concern'd. To shew this, I must bring another quotation from the same play, and that is the *chorus* at the end of the third act.

(I.)

Oh! may it ever be my fate,
Justly those sacred truths to rate;
And those blest laws that have their rise
From wisdom, lodg'd above the skies;
Those which th' Olympian king alone
Dictates from his eternal throne,
(Unlike to those weak mortals frame,)
Live unabolish'd, still the same;
Sprung from the god, replete with heav'nly fire;
They baffle time, and keep their strength entire:

(II.)

The tyrant, and illegal man,
From pride, and rash contempt, began;

*Pride and contempt, that lift him high,
 O'er mountains of impiety,
 Till plac'd aloft he dazzled grows,
 And in his fear his bold foregoes.
 Oh! may the cities cares succeed,
 Nor envying fates their search mislead;
 With ardent humble prayers the gods I'll move,
 The gods shall still my kind protectors prove!*

(III.)

*But whoe'er in word or deed
 Does from the sacred laws recede,
 No divine resentments fearing,
 Nor the hallow'd shrines revering,
 If licentious ease beguile him,
 If dishonest gains defile him,
 If he pursues corrupting pleasure,
 Or grasps at unpermitted treasure,
 Some rigid doom his guilt o'ertake;
 Else who hereafter will controul
 The sallies of his impious soul?
 If no avenging judgments shake
 The triumphs of the dissolute,
 'Tis time th' instructive choirs be mute.*

(IV.)

*Let mistaken zeal no more
 The truth of oracles adore.
 No more to th' Lycian temples pressing,
 Or th' Olympian god addressing;*

If Apollo do not right him,
 On the impious doubts that slight him.
 But thou, eternal Joye! that bearest
 Rule universal, if thou bearest
 The dire neglect, avenge thy son.
 For all th' orac'lous truths of old,
 That were to wretched Laius told,
 Have lost their credit and renown.
 Apollo's honours sink apace,
 And all the deity gives place.

It is observable, that both *OEdipus* and *Jocasta*, in the very act before this *chorus*, speak of the sacred oracles of *Apollo* in a very slighting manner, invalidating the truth and certainty of their predictions; a principal article of the faith of those times, and one of the chief *credenda's* of the Heathen Religion, which *Sophocles* endeavours to establish by the fate of *OEdipus*, which was foretold by the oracle of *Apollo*, and by this fable came to pass to a tittle.

How many important lessons does this great poet teach his audience in this one *Tragedy* of *OEdipus*? I defy any man to parallel it with any favourite *Tragedy* on the *English* stage.

Thus far I think it is plain, that the *Athenian* was infinitely of greater use, benefit, and instruction than the *English* stage; and as it has the advantage of ours in this particular, so I shall shew, in what I have to say on the next ensuing lines of the *Essay*, that the pleasure that that gave was much more noble and great than any thing that can be deriv'd from our strangely, and huddle of incoherent, not to say inconsistent accidents, and things to which we now a-days

give the name of *Tragedy*. To proceed therefore in the *Essay*.

The unities of action, time, and place,
Which, if observ'd, give plays so great a grace,
'Are, tho' but little practis'd, too well known
To be taught here, where we pretend alone
From nicer faults to purge the present age,
Less obvious errors of the *English* stage.

Our illustrious author does not pass over the unities of action, time, and place, as things inconsiderable in themselves, or not essential to the very being of a *Tragedy*, but as things too well known to be the establish'd and absolute rules of this poem, to need, after what *Aristotle* has said upon them, any farther precepts to recommend them; whereas it has all along been the declar'd design of the *Essay*, not to repeat instructions that have been given over and over again by other writers, but to discover such faults and errors which have either been over-look'd, or not so fully explain'd by former teachers in the poetic art. But these *dramatic unities*, that are pass'd over here in so few words, have been so largely, and so fully handled, as well as so learnedly defended by *Aristotle*, *Dacier*, and others, that there could indeed be nothing added to those precepts which enjoin them.

The end of all rules or laws is to instruct the ignorant, or to restrain the licentious; but when such rules or laws are sufficiently promulgated, and so universally known,

known, that no one can plead ignorance of them, nothing but contumacy continues their breach; which contumacy is not to be remov'd by a repetition of the precept, but by a punishment proportioned to the offence. But the punishment laid by art and nature on this offence is contempt and infamy, in declaring that the offenders in this particular are not *tragic* poets, but *poetasters*; or at best but trifling versifiers. I would not be misunderstood, or accused of giving a harder name to these gentlemen than they really deserve; but to obviate all objections upon this head, I shall consider the only one that can be offer'd, and that is, that some of the offenders in this particular have discover'd such great qualities in other parts of poetry, and even in the *drama* itself, that they cannot possibly be said to be *poetasters*, or trifling versifiers. If I mistake not the word *poetaster*, it signifies a pretender to poetry, without the foundation of art; that is, without knowing those duties which nature enjoins in any particular sort of poetry, which such *poetaster* presumes to write in; for indeed, art is only the knowledge of such things as the nature of every poem requires, especially in the essentials of such poem. Now tho' it is true, that we have had writers that have discover'd a considerable address; some in the draughts of the manners, some in the vivacity of the dialogue, and some in the correctness and energy of the diction; yet neither of these particulars, nor all together, are sufficient to make a compleat *Tragedy*, or indeed to make any *dramatic* piece that deserves that name, and by consequence must be pretenders; or, what is all one, *poetasters*; because they have attempted to do what they have shewn, by their writing,

ting, they are not at all capable of performing. Not to observe these unities is to destroy the *fable*, which cannot subsist without them ; but whoever destroys the *fable* destroys the very essence of *Tragedy*, and must by the judgment of nature, as well as art, be condemn'd as weak pretenders to a glory which they were not able to obtain, and may justly therefore be call'd, in that particular, *poetasters*.

I know that there are some men, who will here dispute one part of my assertion, by denying that nature requires any such thing as these *unities* ; they will perhaps yield, that the breach of them is against the rules of *art* ; but they being arbitrary and disputable things, are not sufficient to condemn the offenders in so severe a penalty as I have mention'd. I confess, if they could maintain their point, that nature was not concern'd in this controversy, the dispute might carry a face of the freedom of reasoning ; but alas ! if these gentlemen mean any thing by nature, or will allow that there is any certain meaning fix'd to that word, they must also allow that nature is as much concern'd as art. The word nature I own is something equivocal ; but whether you take it for that great plastic power that form'd all things, and rais'd this wonderful poem of the universe out of *chaos* and confusion into order, harmony, and number ; or whether we take it for the reason of things, as when we speak of the law of nature, we mean the law dictated by human reason ; or whether, in short, we mean by this term the nature of any particular art or science, that is the foundation of reason on which it is built ; take it, I say, in any one of these senses, and we shall find it entirely of our side, and that the offenders in the particular

particular so often mention'd, sin against nature as much as against art ; for nature, in all these three senses, is inconsistent with confusion and absurdity ; but the breach of these unities in *Tragedy* cannot be without confusion, and the most monstrous absurdities. Whoever therefore does not strictly observe these rules, is condemn'd by nature, as well as art, to be a meer pretender, that is, a *poetaster*.

But to prove that this offence cannot be without confusion and absurdity, I offer these following considerations.

In all the pursuits of knowledge and instruction, the human mind has never in view, at the same time, any more than one object ; for multiplicity of objects divides the attention, and calls the judgment to determine on several things at the same time, which must necessarily cause confusion.

In all our enquiries into nature, the same unity of the object is absolutely necessary : As for example, If we propose to examine into the nature of *Hydrostatics*, we pursue that alone, and mingle not the consideration of any other part of experimental philosophy ; because in so doing we must confound the mind by variety of objects, which have nothing to do with the business in hand, and by consequence disappoint the very end we propose by such enquiry.

Again, if our enquiry, or the subject of our consideration be *Algebra* ; to throw in the precepts of moral philosophy, or even those of any other part of the *mathematics*, must unavoidably distract the mind, and produce confusion.

But

But to come closer yet. If the object of our consideration be this principle of moral philosophy, *That the good of many is to be prefer'd to the good of one, or a few.* If we divert the mind from this point, by introducing at the same time the nature of the passions, or any thing else, tho' the subject of *ethics*, it necessarily causes confusion; that is, it distracts the mind and attention from the pursuit of the one object propos'd, to busy it with things that have no relation to it: And the greater the number of such things is, the greater must be the confusion.

To run this point to its utmost extremity, would be to run through all the subjects that ever were written upon. For in all these subjects there is never propos'd more to the mind at once than one object. Thus the moral that is propos'd to be taught by a *Tragedy* is but one, because the mind, as we have seen, can consider but one object at once. Were there more actions in the *fable* of a *Tragedy* than one, there must, by consequence, be more lessons than one; for every dramatic action must have its moral; and every moral perhaps may be very distinct from the other, which must necessarily destroy the attention, distract the judgment, and confound the mind by variety of objects; and so, by endeavouring to teach many things at one time, teach nothing at all.

But here perhaps it may be objected by the modernists, (for they will object and assert any thing) that I contradict my self, when I deny that one *Tragedy* should teach more than one lesson, since I have instanc'd, nay extoll'd the *OEdipus* of *Sophocles* for teaching many. But if they would have the justice to consider this objection, they would find that it is of no manner of weight,

weight, since the action of *OEdipus* teaches but one lesson by its moral; the rest are accidents, and drawn from the principal character and its manners, and carry on, nay accomplish the one lesson taught by the moral of the *fable*, and leading directly, as well as necessarily, to that one grand lesson. These doctrines of the characters, as I may call them, divide not, nor distract the mind and attention, since they do not multiply the object, but are an essential part of it.

This unity of action may be illustrated by the consideration of the *History-Painter*, who in one piece never draws more than one action; because a multiplicity of actions in the same piece must produce confusion, making the eye wander from object to object, without fixing on any one, they being all of equal importance. For this reason there never, I think, has been found a *Painter* yet, at least a *Painter* of any name, who has had more than one action in his piece. However extravagant some of them have been in other particulars, none ever has yet been found, who at the same time plac'd before the eye the judgment of Paris, the skirmish of the Centaurs, and Alexander's passing the Granic flood, much less any more; but our tragic poets have given us many actions in the same piece, nay, cram'd the whole lives of active princes into one play; that is, have propos'd so many objects to the mind at once that it could fix upon none. There might be a great deal more said to prove, that a multiplicity of actions, that is, a multiplicity of objects in the same *Tragedy*, or the least breach of that unity, must cause confusion, by putting the mind upon several duties at the same time.

I have

I have not, in what I have here said, urg'd the rules of art which enjoin this unity of action we are talking of, because some of our leading *wits*, without the least ground in reason, have been pleas'd to call their authority into question; and next, because I think it almost impossible to add any more cogent reasons, any thing more forcible than what we find in *Aristotle*, and *Mons. Dacier*, his best commentator, on this head. By them the unity of action is settled as a fundamental and essential of *Tragedy*, and I have never seen nor heard any thing from our modern cavillers at the *ancients* that made the least approach to even a specious confutation of the rules establish'd; but I have contented my self, *ex abundanti*, to add these few considerations, to show that these rules of *Aristotle* are founded upon the very nature of things, especially on the human mind; and that not to observe this unity of action, is to produce confusion, which is unpardonable in writers of any kind, much more in poets, who are not to put the mind upon difficulties and uneasinesses, but to entertain and improve it with pleasure. And certainly the author, who acts contrary to this, cannot be suppos'd to be a poet, or to merit that name; but must be satisfy'd to bear the name of *Poetaster*, or *Pretender*. Thus much for the unity of action.

The breach of the unities of time and place is incumber'd with no less confusion, or fewer absurdities, and indeed depend very much on the unity of action, tho' not altogether, because there are actions which take up some years, and are perform'd in many places; but those are actions proper only to the *Epopœia*, and are not at all so for *Tragedy*, the rules of which

which poem, and indeed of reason, which is all one, confine the dramatic action both in time and place, because the spectator is suppos'd to be present, and to see the tragic action perform'd; but it is against all probability, to suppose that he can sit here much longer than he does; for to persuade people that they sit in the *theatre* from one to forty, nay fifty years, at the same time that they know that they have been there but three or four hours, is an absurdity that cannot be swallow'd by any man of tolerable understanding. It is not indeed agreed, at least by some of our modern critics, of what number of hours this unity of time consists, some extending it to four and twenty hours, pretending to build this latitude on *Aristotle* himself, but without any just grounds, as *Mons. Dacier* has prov'd beyond the possibility of a reply.

The most that can truly be drawn from *Aristotle*, is the allowance of twelve hours; but then this time ought to be so manag'd, as to have all of it thrown into the intervals of the *acts*, that is not immediately employ'd in the representation. That is all that time which exceeds what is visibly taken up by the representation; for when there is nothing before the *spectators* eyes that witnesses and fixes the duration of what he sees, he with the greater ease suffers himself to be deceiv'd in that time which is suppos'd to pass between the *acts*; because the senses being not concern'd in that affair, they suffer no contradiction, especially if the poet, in the subsequent scenes, do not foolishly take care to rouse him from his deception, by particularizing the quantity of time thus suppos'd to be elaps'd during the performance of the *music*.

But

But those *Tragedies* will always be esteem'd the best, which are suppos'd to take up no more time than what is perform'd requires, as is evident in the *OEdipus* of *Sophocles*. 'Tis in this unity as in the former, and the subsequent, that a breach of it lets in a thousand absurdities, without any certain rule to restrain them; for if you once pass the bounds set by this unity of time, you may as well extend it to a hundred, nay, a thousand years; In the same manner that when you admit of more than one *action*, there is no reason at all why the writer should be stinted to any certain quantity of time, and so, like *Webster* in his *Dutchess of Malfy*, bring in a child just born in the beginning of the play, and before the end of it show him a man not only full grown, but also in years, than which I think there can be nothing more absurd. This is a fault of which the ingenious and witty *Michael de Cervantes*, in his admirable *Don Quixote*, very loudly complains, as being an absurdity too frequent in the *Spanish* dramatists; as he does likewise of their monstrous absurdities in the breach of the unity of place, placing the first *act* in *Europe*, the second in *Asia*, and the third in *Africa*.

• *Beaumont* and *Fletcher*, and most of our dramatic writers before the restoration, are as guilty in this particular as any of the *Spanish* poets can be.

There is this difference between the breach of the unity of time, and this of place, that the former is less liable to discovery, and much more capable of being hid than the latter, and by consequence is less shocking. The breach of the unity of time is only discover'd by reflection, but that of place by the senses, being a direct contradiction to the evidence of the sight,

fight, the most faithful and severe representer of its objects. Here likewise either the want of genius, or lazy supinuity of the modern writers, without any foundation in art or reason, have endeavour'd to enlarge this unity of place much beyond whatever the ancients thought of; for they will needs have it that it extends to the compass of one town, or at least to that of one house; but they might as well have brought into this unity one province, one kingdom, and even one quarter of the globe, since one town, and one house sins, as much against fact and probability as the former; and if you go beyond the very numerical place where the scene first opens, I see no manner of reason why you should admit any bounds at all; the least change of place is incumber'd with the same absurdities with which the greatest labours; for either walls, partitions, or houses, things without motion in their own nature, are put in motion and remov'd, and replac'd often two or three times in the same act, which, besides the impossibility of the fact, very frequently involves the spectator in confusion, which is not always remov'd by the lame help of the painted scenes, the change of which is unknown to the present *French* stage, as it was to that of *Athens*.

Here the scene shall open with the view of a *temple*; but of a sudden, without the least necessity, the solid marble pillars, as well as the whole front of the *temple*, vanish away, to discover a melancholy hero leaning upon a tomb in some of the inmost recesses of the sacred fabric. Now you are to suppose your self in a drawing-room at court; in the next scene, by the shifting of the painted canvas, you have the *Royal-Exchange* before your eyes; and in the *third*, tho' in the

the same act, you find your self in the *Tower*. The want of probability, and the confusion would not be greater, if your play began in *London*, had its second scene in *Paris*; its third in *Rome*, its fourth in *Grand Cairo*, and so on. To pretend, as some of our authors do, that this is not to be avoided, at least, not without the highest difficulty, and the banishing the stage an infinite number of subjects, which now are its ornaments. To this I reply, that there is nothing great to be obtain'd in any art without difficulty; and next, that whatever subjects are by this means banish'd the stage, they are only such that had nothing to do there: And lastly, that in *Greece*, *Rome*, and *France*, the poets have never wanted subjects that were free from these absurdities.

Tho' I think what has been said upon these unities, is sufficient to prove their necessity, and to demonstrate that they are founded in nature as well as art, and that to sin against them is to sin against reason it self, and therefore that he that does so, either by defect of genius or application, incurs the name of *pretender*; yet I shall in this place, by way of supererogation, answer some of those popular objections which are rais'd by the advocates of ignorance, for none but the ignorant are enemies to art.

The mouth of this popular party is a certain gentleman, who, by the contribution of the wit of his friends, and his own peculiar genius (if I may give it that name) in agreeable trifling, a few years since wrought himself into an opinion with the multitude, that he was an author of great importance, and consummate judgment, and made use of this vogue to run down and ridicule all art and science. This gentleman,

man, besides what he has formerly written on this head contrary to sense and reason, has lately, that is, within a few months last past, appear'd with his natural assurance, generally the child of ignorance, the weak advocate of our *English* stage, and the preposterous method of its *Play-wrights*, against the practice of the *Athenian* and *Roman* tragic poets. He speaks indeed magnificently of them both, and would be thought only to attack the *French* stage, not considering that whilst he condemn'd the *Tragedies* of *France*, for a point in which they exactly agree with those of *Greece* and *Rome*, he must inevitably involve those in the same condemnation.

It is not that I imagine this gentleman, or his opinions, considerable enough to deserve my confutation; but since he speaks the sense of the whole party, which by its numbers and clamour challenge some regard, I shall examine into the weight of his arguments; in order to which, let us first hear what he says.

Nations are known, as well as private persons, by their pleasures, and the general inclination cannot be understood by any circumstance so well as by their diversions. In *France* they are delighted with low and fantastical *Farces*, or tedious declamatory *Tragedies*: Their best plays are chiefly recommended by a rigid affectation of regularity, within which the genius is cramp'd and fetter'd, so as to waste all its force, in struggling to perform a work not to be gracefully executed under that restraint. They fall into the absurdity of thinking it more masterly to do little or nothing in a short time, than to invade the rules of time and place, to adorn their plays with greatness and variety. Thus they are finical and mechanic, when they would highly please;

and when they labour for admiration, they have it for performing what they might have better deserv'd if they had neglected.

It is still worse in Spain and Portugal, and their stages cannot be supported without even superstition. It is ordinary there to take their subjects from the Holy Scriptures; and nothing so common as to see saints and angels the persons of their Drama.

Among us there is no part in human life, but in one play or other is represented with propriety and dignity, from the greatest prince to the meanest slave; and often the same great spirit in one character running through all the changes of fortune, &c.

Having once again admonish'd my reader, that I meddle not with this author upon account of his ability, or his own particular worth, but because he is here the mouth of a party, and the defender of a cause, that is only considerable for the number of its partizans, I proceed; and the rather, because this answer to him includes what I had to say on the pleasure that is given by a regular *Tragedy*, above that which is found in the irregular and wandering scenes of our modern interludes, that usurp the name of *Tragedies*; which was one point mention'd by me in the advantages of the just observation of the rules of art, and which I promis'd to speak to.

If nations are known, as well as private men, by their pleasures; that is, if the pleasures, and public diversions of a nation, be a certain rule of determining its excellence, or its degeneracy, as this gentleman asserts, I am afraid that the *English* nation will be look'd upon, by polite foreigners, as extreamly ignorant,

norant, and not far short of a scandalous barbarousness, who can take pleasure in spectacles full of absurdity and confusion, as well as immorality. The confusion and absurdity of our stage has been sufficiently made out by what I have here said, as its immorality has been by other hands.

In order to raising the esteem and value of our stage, this worthy author, with not less ignorance than assurance, endeavours to expose and condemn that of *France*, for a conduct that is opposite to ours. He says, That in *France* they are delighted with low and fantastical *Farces*; which, if we may judge by what has been transmitted to us from thence, is absolutely false: For what does he think of all the plays of *Moliere*, to the translation of which our *English* stage has been so much beholding? Or what does he think of the two *Comedies* of *Corneille*, which he himself thought worthy of putting into an *English* dress? Tho' *Comedy* was by no means the talent of *Corneille*, as has been observ'd by a learned critic.

But to agree with him and his party as far as I can, I will grant that the *English Comedy* is superior to that of *France*; but this concession reaches no farther than *Ben Johnson*, *Shadwell*, *Wycherly*, and some other comic poets of the first magnitude; but takes not in all that riff-raff stuff, that pert chit-chat, and talking interludes, which have no plot, and carry on no design. As what he has said on the *French Comedy* is false in fact, so what he says on their *Tragedy* is nothing but a mixture of folly and ignorance: If we may judge by the *Tragedies* of *Racine*, his charge of the *French Tragedies* being tedious and declamatory, is absolutely false. That they are not without their de-

fects is certain, but those defects are of a nature that this author would never find out, and which we have nothing to do with in this place; but what he charges upon them is so far from being a defect, that it is the highest perfection, I mean their regularity, in which they are upon a foot with the *Greek* poets; and cannot therefore be justly condemn'd by that author, who has allow'd the excellency of the *Athenian* stage, so far as to make it the standard of perfection, when he tells us, *That it will not be the fault of the managers of our stage, if in a little time it does not equal those of Athens and Rome.*

Their best plays are chiefly recommended by a rigid affectation of regularity, within which the genius is cramp'd and fetter'd, so as to waste all its force in struggling to perform a work not to be gracefully executed under that restraint. They fall into the absurdity of thinking it more masterly to do little or nothing in a short time, than to invade the rules of time and place, to adorn their plays with greatness and variety.

To pass over this childish sarcasm, of calling their correctness an affectation of regularity; I would desire this worthy author to prove that regularity cramps the genius; but it has never been his custom to prove any thing he says. How did regularity cramp the genius of *Sophocles*, *Euripides*, and the rest of the *Greek Tragic* poets, all of them fully as regular as any of the *French*; nay, the very models of regularity to these later? But if regularity did not cramp the genius of these great poets, as it is confess'd on all hands that it did not, then is his position absolutely false; and it is plain from *Sophocles*, *Euripides*, and the rest, that it is so far from being true, that *Tragedy* cannot be gracefully written under the restraint of the rules, that it cannot

cannot be done without that restraint. By gracefulness I suppose he means beauty, if he means any thing; now 'tis certain, there can be no beauty without order, and a symmetry of parts; but this order and symmetry of parts is what we call regularity; so that the sum of what this ingenious person says, is that there can be no beauty where there is order and symmetry, a position as ridiculous as absurd.

They fall into the absurdity of thinking it more masterly to do little or nothing in a short time, than to invade the rules of time and place, to adorn their plays with greatness and variety. They (that is, the French) says he, *think it more masterly to do little in a short time, &c.* But pray, good Sir, who does not think it more masterly, as well as they, to keep to probability, than to neglect it? He and his party are the only people that ever were in the world, who pretend to the least share of common sense, that think that a confus'd multitude of things and accidents huddled together, without any bounds of time, was more masterly than to do a little in a short time. But he, it seems, and his party, think it more masterly to invade the unities of time and place, and cram the transactions of weeks, months, and years, and done in divers places, into a representation that continues not longer than three or four hours; and into a place, that in reality extends no farther than the eye views at once, in plain contradiction to both sense and reason. But this he pretends is done, to give a greatness and variety to the piece. *Variety* is indeed the clamour against regularity, as if for want of that the pleasure of the spectacle were lessen'd, if not destroy'd, for it is the pleasure here that they only contend for; and yet I shall immediately

mediately prove, that the pleasure of *Tragedy* is so far from being weaken'd, much less destroy'd, by regularity, that it is infinitely exalted.

But here I should first enquire of this worthy author what he means by *variety*, because that just variety, which is agreeable to the nature of *Tragedy*, is by no means excluded by the unity, but is eminently found in all the fine and regular pieces of antiquity. If he means by *variety* a medley collection of several different actions, that is as destructive of our pleasure as it is opposite to our reason, and the art of the stage. For whatever proposes to the attention divers objects at the same time, by dividing it to many, renders it weak, and not at all attach'd to any one, and by consequence disables it from giving it any great and wonderful pleasure. The scatter'd beams of the sun may afford a sort of warmth; but when they are collected by a glass into one point, they set fire to the object on which they are directed; so pleasure, when dissipated, and spread among various objects, is but weak; but collected by art, and directed by the unities to one action, is strong, great, and often transporting; and it is impossible that the pleasure should be great, where the attention, by being distracted, is but small. Now all that variety which necessarily destroys the unities, hurries the mind from one thing to another, and will not suffer it to settle upon any thing; how can it therefore receive any considerable pleasure when its objects are perpetually shifted, since it is the very nature of the mind to keep that in view as long as it can, the view of which gives it an extraordinary delight? Besides, pleasure starts not upon us all at once, but is rais'd from little beginnings

beginnings to its greatest height by degrees: But if you will not give it time to make this agreeable progression, but snatch it away by this scollish variety, to interpose a new one, it can never come to its height, and by consequence can never be great and transporting.

There can be no great pleasure without strong emotions of the passions, and the stronger these are, the more lively and vigorous is the pleasure; but there can be no strong emotions of the passions, where they are not prepar'd and rais'd by degrees, which cannot be done without a just observation of the unities, and a total rejection of that insipid variety, which does not at all contribute to, but obstruct it.

I would desire any man to take a view of those *Tragedies*, as they call them, that are most remarkable for this variety contended for by the author under our consideration, and sincerely tell me, whether he finds any greater pleasure in much the greater part of them, than what amounts to no more than a bare amusement, and that calm satisfaction which is found in a meer historical narration. But the pleasure of a *Tragedy* justly written, rouses all the faculties of the soul, and fills the whole heart with agitations, that cannot be felt without the highest, and most sovereign pleasure. This author indeed is so unfit to write upon this subject, that he does not so much as know what the pleasure is that ought to arise from a well-written *Tragedy*; for he tells us, that in seeing a well-written *Tragedy*, we shall find an entertainment equal to the best conversation. Poor! wretched! extravagantly ignorant! If this were indeed all the pleasure that the *drama* can afford us, I know not

but this whimsical *variety* might be sufficient to produce it ; tho' I believe that he would be puzzled to find any one evening's conversation, where he made one, that would come up to a very indifferent scene in *Comedy*, much less to the sovereign delight of a well-written *Tragedy*. That the exclusion of this insipid and wild *variety* from *Tragedy* is not injurious to our pleasure, we may borrow an argument of some force from the *History-painter*, the aim of whose art is chiefly, if not wholly, pleasure. Now it is evident, that he obtains this end and aim of his art by the draught of one action only, and that circumscrib'd both by time and place ; but if this medley of variety be not necessary to obtain the end and aim of the painter's art, which is pleasure, it cannot be more necessary in *Tragedy* to arrive at the same end, if pleasure only were the business of that poem.

By what I have said, I hope I have made it pretty plain, that this variety, about which the enemies of art have made such a clamour, in regard of the pleasure which they pretend it gives to the dramatic performance, is so far from heightning the pleasure of that poem, that it renders it weak and enervate ; and the more so, because it is incumber'd with endless confusion and absurdities, as I made out before.

As for the *greatness*, which he very whimsically imagines to be injur'd by the *unities*, it is time enough to answer that, when he shall produce any of his libertine *interludes*, that can in that particular come up to the regular pieces of *Sophocles* and *Euripides*.

That he may not complain that my quotation is partial, and not entire, I shall add the rest which relates to this point. Having demolish'd, as he vainly imagines,

imagines, the *French*, and in that the *Greek* regularity; having spoken likewise with contempt of the stages of *Spain* and *Portugal*, he returns with triumph to *London*, and would persuade you that our *drama* is the most valuable in the world. His words are these:

Among us there is no part in human life, but in one play or other is represented with propriety and dignity, from the greatest prince to the meanest slave; and often the same great spirit, in one character, running through all the changes of fortune, &c.

I confess I am puzzled to find out what he means by the greatest part of this quotation. His business was to have shown, that the *English* stage had not only greater, but different qualities from those he had run down. But as far as ever I could discover, the *French* and the *Spanish* plays may pretend to give us draughts of human life from the prince to the slave, and that with propriety and dignity; that is, with propriety in their *Comedies*, and dignity in their *Tragedies*, to the last of which they have, at least, as just a claim as our *English* stage; and therefore, as our plays have for the most part hitherto been, we cannot pretend to any preheminance above even the *Spaniards* themselves. For, notwithstanding what this author says, their stage is not supported by superstition, and the acting of religious plays, as is plain from the works of *Caldarone*, and *Lopez de Vega*, consisting of many volumes in folio; and ought to have been rather exalted, than condemn'd by this author; because they have made no scruple to invade the *unities* of time and place, in as great a degree as this worthy author could desire. But to proceed.

And

And often the same great spirit, in one character, running through all the changes of fortune, &c. Here again he says either nothing, or nothing to the purpose. If he means by *all* the changes of fortune, the change from bad to good fortune, or from good to bad fortune, and I know of no other change of fortune that there can be, that is a variety that is so far from being excluded by the rules of art, that it is establish'd by them; for who, that as ever heard of the rules of *Aristotle*, can be ignorant that he makes the changes of fortune, and discoveries in the principal persons, or heroes, and heroines of the *Tragedy*, to form the most beautiful *Fable* that the tragic poet can make choice of? And is not this likewise plain in the *OEdipus* of *Sophocles*? nay, is it not the foundation of the moral of that very play, which is to let us see, by the change of fortune in *OEdipus*, that no man can be look'd upon entirely happy, before death has deliver'd him from a subjection to such change? Do not we see *OEdipus* first prosperous, great, and happy, and afterwards entirely miserable? so that there is the same great spirit shown us in the same play, in both the states of fortune. But I am afraid this gentleman will be extremely put to it, to find any of the great spirits on our stage passing from one state of fortune to the other with such beauty as *OEdipus* does. But by his expression of seeing the same great spirit running through all the changes of fortune, he plainly discovers that he knows nothing of the business of *Tragedy*, but takes it to be the celebrating of some great person, and the magnifying his character; whereas the heroes, or principal persons of a *Tragedy*, are no more regarded by the poet, than

as far as they conduce to the establishing the *moral* of the play. The poet having first fix'd his *moral*, considers what sort of characters are necessary to produce it; and then he gives to them what names he pleases, either fictitious or real. But I grow weary of this trifling author, and shall therefore take no more notice of him; but I shall not dismiss the point of *variety* without a few more words.

I am not therefore for excluding a just *variety* from *tragedy*, since it is to be found in the most beautiful. Nay, there must be a variety of the passions, and a variety of the incidents, as far as it is agreeable to, and consistent with the *unities*, which will afford the poet sufficient room for this quality almost in every scene. For the variety of a whole *Tragedy*, I refer the *English* reader to the translation of the *OEdipus* of *Sophocles*. For the different turns of a single scene, I shall beg leave to transcribe the quarrel betwixt *Agamemnon* and *Menelaus*, which I translated some years ago from *Euripides*, and then printed upon another occasion.

To show the preparation of this quarrel, I shall give the argument of the first *Act*.

Agamemnon, now repenting that he had agreed to the sacrificing of his daughter, in the night-time consults with an old faithful servant of his, how to prevent her arrival in the camp, where she was hourly expected, with her mother *Clitemnestra*. To this servant therefore he intrusts a letter to be deliver'd to his wife, in which he desires her not to bring *Iphigenia* to *Aulis*. In this *act* *Agamemnon* declares the first seeds of the Trojan expedition, and gives an insight into the present fable.

The

The second act begins with *Menelaus* intercepting the messenger, and striving to get the letter from him.

Old Man. "Oh! *Menelaus*! spare your self a guilt,
"Unworthy of your self, and of your fame.

Menelaus. "No more, no more; thou'rt to thy
"lord too faithful.

Old M. "Y' upbraid me with a virtue, not a crime.

Mene. "If thou persist, thou shalt full soon repent
"thee.

Old M. "They are the king's dispatches you
"would seize,

"And those you ought not, Sir, to violate.

Mene. "Thou ought'st not, wretch, by guilty faith
"mised,

"To bear perdition to the *Grecian* glory.

Old M. "Of that I am no judge——forgoe my
"packet.

Mene. "I will not.

Old M. "Nor will I quit it.

Mene. "Or let it go, or from my hand receive
immediate death.

Old M. "I count it glory for my lord to die.

Mene. "Villain! let go thy packet——dares a
"a grovling slave

"Contend, in saucy words, with mighty kings?

Old M. "My lord! my lord! oh! *Agamemnon*
"hear me!

"With violent hands he robs me of thy letters.

Enter

Enter Agamemnon.

Agam. "What noise! what tumult's this within
"my hearing?"

Old M. "Hear me, great Sir, I will the truth
"unfold."

Agam. "Why, *Menelaus*, hast thou thus abus'd
"my faithful servant?"

Mene. "Ha! *Agamemnon*! Gods! immortal gods!
"Turn, turn thy guilty eye, and look on me!
"If still thou canst behold my injur'd face."

Agam. "Yes, did the deadly Basilisk itself
"Ride on thy fiery balls, I thus durst view thee——
"The son of *Atreus* will by none be brow-beat."

Mene. "See'st thou these letters full of base con-
"tents?"

Agam. "Yes, I do see them, and in them thy
"crime,"

"Which I—— But give 'em to me strait.——"

Mene. "Not till the *Grecian* chiefs have heard
"them read."

Agam. "And have you then? —— But sure you
"durst not do't;"

"Thou durst not break thy sovereign's letters open."

Mene. "Yes, yes, I know 'twill vex thy haughty
"soul"

"To have thy secret treasons thus expos'd."

Agam. "Oh! all ye Gods! what insolence is this?"

Mene. "From *Argos* you expect your daughter
"here."

Agam.

Agam. " And what have you to do, with sawcy eye,
" To overlook my actions ?

Mene. " My will, Sir, is my right—— I'm not
" thy slave.

Agam. " 'Tis well, Sir, wondrous well, that I,
" supream

" Of lords and kings, must be depriv'd the right
" To govern my own family as I please !

Mene. " You are not fit t' enjoy that common right,
" Your mind's unsettled, veering as the wind.
" For with thy self at war, it now determines
" One thing, the following moment whirls about,
" And then designs another ; nor fix'd in that,
" Succeeding minutes vary your resolves.

Agam. " Oh ! spite, spite, spite ! a spiteful tongue
" is odious.

Mene. " But an inconstant and a various mind
" Is still unjust, and still to friends unknown.
" Your self I will lay open to your self ;
" But let not pride and anger make you deaf,
" Averse to truth—— I shall not praise you much.
" Look back, look back, recall, recall the time
" When your ambition zealously pursu'd
" Supream command o'er all the *Grecian* chiefs,
" To lead our vengeful arms to treacherous *Troy*.
" An humble seeming you indeed put on,
" As if you shun'd what most your heart desir'd.
" How lowly then ! how fawning then to all !
" With flattering hand you courted every one,
" Your gates set wide to the inglorious vulgar,
" Familiar with the meanest ; hearing all,
" And seeking those who sought not *Agamemnon*.
" Yes, with obsequious bows you brib'd the mob

" To

" To give that empire you so ill can bear.
 " No sooner had you gain'd your wish, *command*,
 " But all your supple manners were thrown by.
 " You to your friends no more confess'd the friend ;
 " Hard of access, and rarely seen abroad ;
 " All mean and low ! a man of honour shou'd
 " Then be most fix'd, and zealous for his friends,
 " When by his fortune he can most assist them.
 " As soon as I perceiv'd this shameful error,
 " I, like a friend and brother, told you of it.
 " Again, in *Aulis* here ———
 " Since the great Gods deny'd to swell our sails
 " With prosperous gales, your haughty spirit fell,
 " You were dismay'd, dejected, and forlorn.
 " The *Grecians* cry aloud to be dismiss'd,
 " And not to languish in this port in vain.
 " How wretched hadst thou been, and how inglorious,
 " How full of anguish, agonies of death,
 " Had you then ceas'd to lead these strong battalions,
 " To fill the *Trojan* fields with warlike *Greeks* ?
 " In this distress you then could think of me,
 " Ask my advice how to avoid this shame.
 " But then when *Calchas* from the victims found,
 " Your daughter, offer'd at *Diana's* altar,
 " Would give the *Greeks* a safe and speedy voyage,
 " Thy well pleas'd eyes confess'd the sudden joy,
 " That spread itself thro' all thy inward pow'rs :
 " Thy ready tongue declar'd thy willing mind,
 " That she shou'd know the goddess' sacred knife ;
 " Free, unconstrain'd, and not by any force.
 " Pretend not that ; your high commands you sent
 " That she to *Aulis* should with speed repair,
 " Deceiv'd by thee with the false promis'd joy

*

" Of

" Of being the long-wish'd bride of great *Achilles*.
 " But here by a strange whirl, and change of will,
 " You other letters send to countermand her.
 " You will not be the murtherer of your daughter!
 " How many thus with an unsteady hand
 " Do steer the dangerous helm of government!
 " Fond to engage in some great bold design,
 " Yet swift to quit it when they are engag'd.
 " Aw'd by the people some, and some more justly
 " Compell'd to guard from foes their own dominions.
 " But I th' unhappy fate of *Greece* deplore!
 " All arm'd, and ready to assault the foe,
 " And with full glory quash the proud *Barbarian*,
 " Are left their sport and scorn,
 " For the repose of the great *Agamemnon*!
 " Oh! ne'er advance a man for wealth, or power;
 " Wisdom alone deserves supream command,
 " And a wise man is naturally a king.

Chorus. " All brothers quarrels are unhappy
 " things.

Agam. " With truth I shall reproach you in few
 " words;

" For insolence, like this, deserves not many.
 " A brother's name shall teach my injur'd tongue
 " A modesty, it seems, to you unknown;
 " Tho' modesty does seldom touch the base.
 " For when bright honour has the breast forsook,
 " Seldom confederate modesty prevails.
 " Then tell me, Sir, the cause of all this rage?
 " Whence all this anger? whence this indignation?
 " Who is it that injures or affronts you here?
 " What is't you want? pray, what is your desire?
 " Your virtuous wife? your happy nuptial state?

" At

- " At my expence must I restore your wishes?
 " Which when possess'd, your own ill-conduct lost
 " you?
 " What, to regain your beauteous, faithless wife,
 " Wou'd you thus tread on honesty and reason?
 " The pleasures of ill-men are evil all!
 " Oh! vain! oh! doating madness! oh! blind folly!
 " The Gods, indulgent to thy happiness,
 " Have rid thee of a false injurious wife;
 " And thou, fond fool, now burn'st with strange de-
 " fire,
 " To force the distant plague home to thy bosom!
 " The suitors to this *Helena* with you,
 " Each, by fallacious hope of her, betray'd,
 " To *Tyndrus* swore, that with united arms
 " They wou'd defend the happy man she chose,
 " Apply to these, with these pursue the war.
 " But conscious of the weakness of that oath,
 " Compell'd by fraud or folly, you despair,
 " If I forsake your foul detested cause,
 " 'Twill not be strong enough to lead them on.
 " But, *Menelaus*, this assure thy self,
 " My guiltless child, for you, I shall not murder.
 " Shou'd I comply, wild horror and remorse
 " Wou'd haunt my daily thoughts, and nightly slum-
 " bers.
 " What I have said is, Sir, so plain and easy,
 " You need no comment to explain my meaning.
 " But if you still to justice will be blind,
 " I shall however, Sir, protect my own.
 Chorus. " This differs from the former, yet it
 " teaches,
 " That of our children we should take just care.

Mene. "Oh! Gods! how very wretched am I
"grown? I have no friends!

Agam. "Yes, yes, you shall have friends,
"If you will not destroy 'em.

Mene. "Oh! in what?
"In what do you confess the friend and brother,
"Of the same father born?

Agam. "I shall be wife,
"Not mad, with you.

Mene. "Friends griefs are common.

Agam. "Then call me friend, when you design
"no harm.

Mene. "This obstinacy's vain, for sure thou
"know'st,

"In this thou must contend with *Greece*, not me.

Agam. "*Greece* too, like thee, by some ill fury's
"haunted.

Mene. "Oh! proud, and vain of empire! thou
"betray'st

"To that thy brother. But I shall apply

"To other arts, and other friends, for justice. [*Going*]

Enter a Messenger.

Messenger. "Oh! *Agamemnon*, king of all the
"Greeks,

"I bring you pleasing news! now in the camp

"Your daughter *Iphigenia* is arriv'd,

"And *Clytemnestra* your beloved queen,

"With young *Orestes*.—— This royal troop,

"After so long an absence, must be welcome.

"With speed I came before to bring the news,

"The army throngs to see the glorious fight.

"Some

"Some talk of nuptials for the royal virgin;

"Some, that she comes to be in sacred rites

"Of great *Diana* here initiated.

"But you, oh! *Agamemnon*! crown your brows,

"And, *Menelaus*, share the nuptial joys.

"Let musick, and the dancers, celebrate

"This happy day.

Agam. "Thy zeal and joy I do commend. Be

"gone,

"I of the rest will take peculiar care.

"Ah! me! oh!—oh! wretched *Agamemnon*!

"What shall I say? oh! where shall I begin?

"Into what noose of fate am I now fall'n!

"'Tis the malicious cunning of my fortune

"Thus to prevent my just paternal care!

"Oh! happy state of mean and low degree!

"There grief, at liberty, may vent her moans,

"And give their mournful thoughts a plaintive tongue!

"But greatness is confin'd to hateful form!

"The people us, not we the people govern.

"Proud majesty denies my woes relief,

"Shame stops the flowing torrent of my grief:

"But not to weep is yet a greater shame!

"Thus a chain'd slave I prove to a great name.

"I must curb nature, and deny its course;

"And tho' I'm fall'n into the greatest woe

"That any mortal wretch can ever know,

"Yet in my breast the anguish must contain,

"And only I my self must know my pain.

"But oh! my wife! what shall I say to her?

"How shall I meet her? with what looks behold

"her?

"Her coming has redoubled all my woe!

" She comes unsent for, no invited guest,
 " Yet who can blame the tender mother's care,
 " To do the dearest office to her child?
 " But now the foul perfidious cause she'll find
 " Of the most inauspicious journey.
 " Or, how shall I restrain the bursting tears,
 " When I receive the tender hapless virgin!
 " Ha! now methinks I see her suppliant kneel,
 " With lifted hands, and upcast streaming eyes,
 " And trembling lips, thus pitifully pleading:
 " Oh! father, will you kill me? will your hand,
 " A father's hand, give me to such nuptials?
 " And then the little infant, young *Orestes*,
 " In broken sounds, and yet intelligible,
 " Accuse me of his dearest sister's murder!
 " Alas! alas! how have the cursed nuptials
 " Of the Barbarian *Paris* thus destroy'd me!
 " For he has brought these cursed evils on me.
 " *Mene*. " Give me your hand, give me your dear
 " hand!

Agam. " Here take it, for it is your victory.

Mene. " By *Pelops* our grandfire, and our father
 " *Atreus*,

" I swear, my brother, what I am going to say
 " Are the sincerest dictates of my mind.
 " I could not see the tears fall from thy eyes,
 " Thy awful eyes, but pity split my soul,
 " And the big drops run tumbling down my face.
 " My rage ebb'd out apace, and now I see
 " I ought not to be happy by thy misery.
 " Now by the Gods you shall not touch your daughter,
 " Thy *Iphigenia* is, for me, immortal.
 " Why should thine die, and mine remain alive?

Helen

"Helen is not so dear to this fond breast,"
 "To make me trample nature under foot,
 "And purchase her embraces with thy blood,
 "The heat of youth, and my untam'd desire,
 "Made me speak madly when I urg'd the deed.
 "Oh! 'tis a dreadful thing to slay ones child,
 "To dip our hands in our own off-spring's blood.
 "'Tis monstrous! 'tis unnatural.—
 "No, let the army be dismiss'd with speed,
 "And march away from *Aulis* to their homes.
 "But cease thy tears, by Heav'n I cannot bear them.
 "I never will urge more the fatal theme.
 "By all the Gods she shall not die for me;
 "For what has she to do with *Helena*?
 "By *Jove*, I love my royal brother so,
 "I would not be the cause of his unrest,
 "To be the happy monarch of the world;
 "And my heart akes that e'er I shock'd thee so.
 "We may repent with honour our misdeeds.
Chorus. "Generously hast thou said, oh! *Menelaus*!
 "And worthy *Tantalus* the son of *Jove*.
Agam. "Oh! *Menelaus*, I do feel thy kindness,
 "That thou hast thus deceiv'd my expectation,
 "In words that truly do confess the brother.
Mene. "Passion may sometimes warp a generous
 "mind;
 "But such a cruel kindred I abhor.
Agam. "But oh! my brother, such hard fate sur-
 "rounds me,
 "I cannot 'scape this bloody sacrifice;
 "For *Iphigenia* must a victim fall.
Mene. "Who can compel you to destroy your
 "daughter?

Agam. "The whole *Grecian* army.

Mene. "Send her back to *Argos*.

Agam. "That cannot be, I cannot so deceive
"them.

Mene. "You ought not by the vulgar thus be aw'd.

Agam. "Calchas, alas! the oracle will reveal.

Mene. "Suppose him dead. The dead can tell
"no tales.

Agam. "Oh! but that son of *Syſiphus* knows all.

Mene. "In what can *Ulyſſes* injure *Agamemnon*?

Agam. "His artful tongue commands the ſoldiers
"hearts.

Mene. "He's fond indeed of popular applauſe.

Agam. "Oh! think him, therefore, by the troops
"ſurrounded,

"The ſecret oracle by *Calchas* told

"Divulging to the liſtning warriors ears,

"My piety ſtiling impious ſacrilege,

"Refuſing to the *Grecian* glory

"The victim that *Diana* has requir'd.

"The army won by theſe his ſmooth pretences,

"Both You and I ſhall fall by their dire rage,

"Yet by our death not ſave my daughter's life.

"Suppoſe we fled to *Argos* from the camp,

"My flight with ſword and fire they wou'd purſue,

"And lay my country waſte. It wonnot be!

"I muſt be wretched, and my child muſt die!

"Thus woe and miſery ſurround me!

"Into theſe ſtreights the Gods reduce me!

"But oh! my brother! this alone canſt thou;

"Let not my wife the fatal buſineſs know,

"Before my child I've offer'd up to *Pluto*,

"That with the feweſt tears, I may, I be unhappy.

"These

These gentlemen, who are so fond of *variety*, sure, after the view of this scene, will not have the assurance to assert that regularity excludes *variety*, since in this one scene there is a variety so great and so moving; for here we see no less than four different states of the passions succeeding one another; let them show me the like in any scene of an irregular *Tragedy*, and I will give up the cause. Here is first a violent anger on one side, and a no less violent anger on the other, mingled with indignation, and that between two brothers and friends; next, by the coming in of the messenger, succeeds a grief as great, as moving: This is follow'd in the third place by the return of a brotherly and friendly love, with a beautiful reconciliation of the quarrelling parties; and the scene concludes, with a noble struggle of resolution springing from necessity and glory. But this is but the variety of one scene of *Iphigenia*; the rage of *Clytemnestra*, the anger and indignation of *Achilles*, the complaints of *Iphigenia*, and the struggles of *Agamemnon* with all of them, increase the variety to that degree, that I can remember no modern tragedy, how irregular soever, that can equal it, even in the particular of *variety*.

*The unities of action, time, and place,
Which, if observ'd, give plays so great a grace,
Are, tho' but little practis'd, too well known
To be taught here, &c.*

I have met with some people, who, not understanding the true meaning, and full force and energy of his *Grace's* words, have imagin'd that he did not look upon the unities as such essentials to *Tragedy* as I have here endeavour'd to make them; but only, that they were ornamental parts, that gave indeed a great grace to the representation, but were not of that absolute necessity and importance as to dissolve the very being of *Tragedy* by their breach or omission. But first, our noble author avoids treating of them in their utmost extent, because he tells us they are already too well known; that is, their foundation in art and reason has been too far made out and defended by *Aristotle*, and his best commentators, to need to have instructions about them repeated in this place, and the expression, *so great a grace*, plainly includes all that I have said about them. For grace supposes the perfection of beauty, and is something more than beauty, tho' it arises from it, and gives it its most agreeable and touching quality, which makes the way to the heart, and is what a certain author calls, *The nameless power to please*.

There are women whose features are all beautiful, and whose shape exact, and yet raise only admiration, without engaging the heart, because they want what we call *grace*, and what *Catullus* calls *sal*.

*Quintia formosa est multis: mihi candida, longa,
Recta est. hoc ego, sic singula confiteor.*

*Totum illud, formosa, nego. nam nulla venustas,
Nulla in tam magno est corpore mica salis.*

*Lesbia formosa est: quæ cum pulcherrima tota est,
Tum omnibus una omnes surripuit Veneris.*

But

But tho' every beauty has not this *sal*, or grace, as is plain from this *epigram* of *Catullus*, and the distinction he makes in it between *Quintia* and *Lesbia*, yet no woman has it without beauty. From hence, by way of *metaphor*, the word *grace* is here apply'd to *Tragedy*, and implies, that the observation of the *unities* gives plays the last and highest, as well as most engaging perfection. Hence it is evident, that the *Essay*, by this expression of *so great a grace*, does not speak so lightly of the *unities* as to make them meer ornamental qualities, but essential; for where any essential part is wanting, or maim'd, that piece cannot properly be said to have *beauty*, much less a *great grace*. But I have made it out, that a breach of the *unities* not only maims, but even destroys the piece itself.

I know it will be objected, that *Orway's* two *Tragedies* of the *Orphan*, and *Venice preserv'd*, come not up to that strictness which I have made a distinguishing mark betwixt a *tragic* poet and a *pretender*; and since therefore I do not deny but that *Orway* was a true poet, nay a poet of the first magnitude, tho' he has fallen short in this particular, all I have said on it falls to the ground.

To this I answer, *first*, that *Orway* has observ'd the *unity* in both his plays; and next, that he observes the *unities* of time and place as far as they were then understood. Besides, there is a great deal of difference betwixt the breach of the *unities* of action, and those of time and place. The *unity* of action is an essential, without which the *fable* cannot exist; for there never was, nor ever can be a *fable* of any kind, whether *dramatic* or *epic*, or any other sort, that has
more

more than one action; but the *unity* of time is not an essential of *fable* in general, but added to *Tragedy* for the sake of verisimilitude, or probability only; and a breach of it destroys not the *tragic* fable, but loads it with improbable absurdities: But these absurdities being found out by reflection and reasoning, and not by a contradiction of the evidence of the senses, which immediately convicts, a sin against time is not so obvious, and, if nicely manag'd, not so shocking, as that against the *unity* of place, the breaches of which fall under the eye, and are guilty of offending against the *verisimilitude*, or probability, in a manner that is immediately discover'd, nay even while it is committing: For we see *mountains, castles, cities, groves*, and other things, contrary to nature, enjoying motion, and actually moving before us. It is not enough to say, that this is only a representation, and therefore may be excus'd for the ease and convenience of the poet. Painting is a representation, and yet the painter is always oblig'd not to admit any thing unnatural into his representation; the same holds good in *Tragedy*.

Again, all representations are good or bad, valuable or contemptible, as they are natural or unnatural; but a *tragic* representation, where the *unity* of place is not observ'd, I have sufficiently prov'd to be unnatural; that is, to sin against the known laws of nature, and utterly to destroy probability, and cannot therefore be good, but must necessarily be bad, not to say contemptible.

The *unity* of place, like that of time, is not so essential to *fable* in general, as by a breach of it to destroy it; for it is plain, that the epic fable admits of
many

many days, nay months, perhaps years, and of great variety of places; but it is join'd to the dramatic fable, as I have said, for the sake of probability, and to avoid the most shocking absurdities and confusion. Hence it follows, that tho' *Otway*, and perhaps some other great poets, may seem to fall under my former censure, yet since they have not broke the unity of action, but only extended those of time and place, according to the receiv'd notion of them, they are by no means within the compass of my condemnation.

But now 'tis time to proceed with the *Essay*.

First then, soliloquies had need be few,

Extremely short, and spoke in passion too.

Our lovers talking to themselves, for want

Of friends, make all the pit their confident.

Nor is the matter mended yet, if thus

They trust a friend only to tell it us:

Th' occasion should as naturally fall,

As when * *Bellarion* confesses all.

This precept of the *Essay* is extremely fine and curious, and, tho' so necessary for the removing of too frequent and awkward absurdities from the drama, never observ'd by any one else. *Soliloquies* are indeed a fault peculiar to the modern stage, or else a judge

* In *Philaster*, a Play of Beaumont and Fletcher.

of that penetration, which is evident in *Aristotle*, could never have pass'd it by without any remark; for I do not remember that there is any one to be found in all the *Greek* tragedies which remain to this day. There are indeed speeches in several of them, which to an unheedful reader may seem to be so; but there is nothing farther from fact, since the *Chorus* is always present on the stage, from the first opening of the play to the end of it, and to them are all those speeches address'd, which some may take to be *Soliloquies*: For tho' the *Chorus* is said to take possession of the stage only upon its first singing, yet the meaning of that is no more than that then it first begins to declare its concern in the action of the *Tragedy*, tho' they have been present from the very first opening of the *scene*; and this is plain even beyond contradiction, because their very first song is built upon what is said by the speakers in what we call the *first act*, and what *Aristotle* calls the *prologue*, which they could not do, had they not been present to hear what had been said.

Some of the first words, which *Medea* speaks in that *Tragedy* of *Euripides*, seem indeed to be of this nature, because they are utter'd by her before she appears on the stage, when suppos'd to be alone, and could not therefore address them to the *Chorus*. But then these words, these soliloquies of *Medea* are exactly according to this rule in the *Essay*, that is,

Extreamly short, and spoke in passion too.
Consisting only of a few disjointed exclamations, springing from the extremity of rage, grief, and despair.

Tho'

Tho' the *Essay* instances only love *soliloquies*, yet this precept takes in all of what kind soever, which indeed abound in *Shakespeare*, and other of our celebrated poets, tho' equally unnatural and absurd in all, none but madmen talking aloud to themselves.

Orway, in the *first scene* of his *Orphan*, has endeavour'd to avoid this fault of *soliloquy*, by introducing *Ernesto* and *Paulino*; but it is done so awkwardly, that it is evident that they only repeat to one another things known to them both, meerly to tell them us; for that *scene* has nothing to do with the rest of the play, and has many years been cut out in the representation, without the least maim to the action.

But then the same poet has, in the *first scene* of his *Venice preserv'd*, let the audience into all that was necessary for them to know, of what went before the very opening of the play, with an address as masterly as beautiful, when *Jaffier* presses his condition, and that of his beloved wife *Belvidera*, to her father, the inexorable *Priuli*. The same may be said of *Shakespeare*, in the opening of his *Tempest*, where all the narration that *Prospero* makes to his daughter *Miranda* has not the least clumsy regard to the audience, but is absolutely necessary to the information of *Miranda*.

Ben Johnson, in his *Comedy of the Alchymist*, has the same admirable address, in letting the audience into the knowledge of all that was necessary for them to be inform'd in, in relation to what was antecedent to the opening of the play, by that comical quarrel betwixt *Face* and *Subtle*, in which the sage *Doll Common* is the prudent moderator.

But

But in none is the necessity of what is said more evident, than when *Bellarion* confesses all, in the catastrophe of *Fletcher's* play call'd *Philaster*, or *Love lies a bleeding*.

The importance of this precept is plain, from the offences committed against it by all our poets. *Shakespeare* has frequently *soliloquies* of threescore lines, and those very often, if not always, calm, without any emotion of the passions, or indeed conducive to the business of the play; I mean, where there is any business in the play peculiar to it. That famous *soliloquy*, which has been so much cry'd up in *Hamlet*, has no more to do there, than a description of the grove and altar of *Diana*, mention'd by *Horace*. *Hamlet* comes in talking to himself, and very sedately and exactly weighs the several reasons or considerations mention'd in that *soliloquy*,

To be, or not to be, &c.

As soon as he has done talking to himself, he sees *Ophelia*, and passes to a conversation with her, entirely different to the subject he had been meditating on with that earnestness, which as it was produc'd by nothing before, so has it no manner of influence on what follows after, and is therefore a perfectly detach'd piece, and has nothing to do in the play. The long and tedious *soliloquy* of the bastard *Falconbridge*, in the play of *King John*, just after his being receiv'd as the natural son of *Cœur de Lion*, is not only impertinent to the play, but extremely ridiculous. To go through all the *soliloquies* of *Shakespeare*, would be to make a volume on this single head. But this I can say in general,

neral, that there is not one in all his works that can be excus'd by nature or reason.

Beaumont and *Fletcher* come under the same condemnation, without his other excellencies, to make amends for this and many other defects of much greater consequence.

I am sensible that I shall raise the anger and indignation of many readers by what I have here said, what I have elsewhere observ'd, and what I shall hereafter add about the faults of *Shakespear*; they will, like the *Romans* against *Horace*, cry out that I have lost all modesty.

Clamant periisse pudorem—

For there were in his time, even in *Rome* itself, as well as in *England*, a sort of senseless bigots to what was lik'd and approv'd in their forefathers days, without examining into the merits of the cause. *Lucilius* was the incorrect idol of those times; *Shakespear* of ours. Both gain'd their reputation from a people unacquainted with art; and that reputation was a sort of traditionary authority, look'd upon to be so sacred, that *Horace* among the *Romans*, in a much more polite age than that in which *Lucilius* writ, could not escape their censure for attacking him; nor can *Mr. Rymer*, or any other just critic, who shall presume, tho' with the highest justice and reason, to find fault with *Shakespear*, escape the indignation of our modern traditionary admirers of that poet. Yet one would wonder, that in an age and nation, where we are allow'd to make use of our reason in the most sacred enquiries of religion itself, tho' perhaps in some parts of it

above

above the determination of our reason, we should be deny'd the liberty of reasoning on those things, which are entirely built upon reason; but this is because reason is against them; and, as it has been observ'd, when reason is against a man, then is that man against reason. And this is the case betwixt the blind adorers of *Shakespear*, and those just admirers of him, who will not allow him to have all the beauties of a great dramatic poet, because he has some; but freely censure his faults, at the same time that they allow his excellencies; and among his faults there is none more eminent than this of his frequent *soliloquies*.

All dramatic representations ought to be natural, at least nothing visibly unnatural can be admitted into them; but these *soliloquies* being what never happens in human nature, must be esteem'd too unnatural to be suffer'd in a representation which depends entirely upon nature. And this consideration alone is sufficient not only to demonstrate the consummate judgment of the author of the *Essay on Poetry*, in his laying down this precept against this unnatural practice; but also the fineness of his taste, in making the discovery of a defect so generally embrac'd, and often practis'd as a beauty.

Figures of speech, which poets think so fine,
 Art's needless varnish to make nature shine,
 Are all but paint upon a beauteous face,
 And in descriptions only claim a place.

There

There can be nothing more beautiful and charming than these four lines; for tho' they are sweet and flowing, yet have they strength; and an expressive energy, conveying to us the finest sense, and the justest determination of consummate judgment, in the most harmonious verse in the world. The doctrine they contain is of importance in itself; but more so when directed to the *English* writers; because while they place the chief excellence of poetry in the *dic-tion*, or language, they have not taken sufficient care to make even that truly excellent; having seldom had judgment enough to know that no diction can be good and fine, that is not natural, and varied according to the subject. They have generally been but meer dabblers in *rhetorick*; and because the figures of speech; which are taught by that art, are certainly very fine and ornamental when properly made use of; they have throng'd and cram'd them into their dramatic *dic-tion*, where they have nothing to do: *Tragedy* is, or ought to be perpetually active and conversant with the passions, and generally in their most violent state. But these figures of speech, which his *Grace* touches upon, are so little adapted to the nature of that state of the passions, that they perfectly obstruct and destroy it:

But lest the reader should mistake the meaning of the noble author's words, I shall presume to give my sense of them. He designs not therefore, in my opinion, to forbid the moderate and proper use of *Tropes*, especially the *metaphor*; because they reach no further than particular words; and are often naturally prompted by the passion itself; nor does he design to exclude the just use of any of those figures of speech

which are naturally and immediately concern'd in the expression of the *passions*, and consistent with the nature of *dialogue*, such as the *exclamation*, *interrogation*, or the like ; but only that immoderate use of the *tropes* and *figures* in all places, without any regard to the justice and propriety of the subject, which is to be found in too many of our *English* poets, who lay claim to the fineness of language, tho', like *Cleophon*, complain'd of by *Aristotle* among the *Greeks*, they multiply *metaphors*, and the other *tropes* and *figures* to that degree, that they scarce express any thing in proper words, which destroys the very beauty of those figures, that only give a beauty to the poetic *diction* by the moderation and justness of their use. They make no distinction between those ornaments of speech, which are proper for the *narrative* poem, and those which are so to the *tragic*. It is this want of judgment only which is condemn'd by the *Essay*, and which is exactly call'd by that,

Art's needless varnish to make nature shine.

It is very justly call'd needless, because it is not of the least use to set nature in a stronger light than its own native simplicity will place it. Nay, this *varnish* very often, by its adventitious shine, obscures the genuine lustre of that nature the fond and injudicious poet brought it to enlighten. Two or three words sometimes have infinitely a greater force in touching the soul than several lines can have. I remember Mrs. Barry told me more than once, that in her part of *Monimia*, she never spoke these three words, *Ah! poor Castalio!* without tears. But all that pathetic force

force had been lost if any more words had been added, and the poet would have striven in vain to heighten them, by the addition of figures of speech; since the beauty of those three plain simple words is so great, by the force of nature, that they must have been weaken'd and obscur'd by the most shining flowers of *rhetorick*. And this instance alone is sufficient to explain and justify the *Essay*, in these lines that we have quoted.

Orway, who was a perfect master of the *tragic* passions, every where draws them with that natural simplicity here recommended by the *Essay*; and therefore he never fails to raise strong emotions in the soul. *Mr. Dryden*, who affects a quite different style, that style which is condemn'd by the *Essay*, seldom or never touches the *passions*, at least till he had left off in a great measure that uniformity of *diction*, that perpetual swelling, and continual *tropological* expression; and endeavour'd, here and there, more nearly to imitate nature, in a just simplicity of the language: But this was not his natural inclination, nor a road that he was fond of travelling, but only deviated sometimes into it by a happy chance. That this was not his true *gusto* is pretty plain from two instances; the first is, that when the translation of *Euripides* was recommended to him, instead of that of *Homer*, he reply'd, *That he confess'd that he had no relish of that poet, who was a master of the tragic simplicity*. The other is, that for most part of his time he commonly express'd a very mean, if not contemptible opinion of *Orway*; tho' at last, especially in his *preface to du Fresnoy*, he declar'd in his favour; and yet even here he could

not but throw in some exceptions against his *diction*, as his own words will plainly show.

To express the passions, which are seated on the heart, by outward signs, is one great precept of the painters, and very difficult to perform. In poetry, the very same passions and motions of the mind are to be express'd; and in this consists the principal difficulty, as well as the excellency of that art. This (says my author) is the gift of Jupiter; and to speak in the same heathen language, we call it the gift of our Apollo; not to be obtain'd by pains or study, if we are not born to it. For the motions, which are studied, are never so natural as those which break out in the height of a real passion. Mr. Otway possess'd this part as thoroughly as any of the ancients or moderns. I will not defend every thing in his *Venice preserv'd*; but I must bear this testimony to his memory, that the passions are truly touch'd in it, though perhaps there is somewhat to be desir'd both in the grounds of them, and in the height and elegance of expression; but nature is there, which is the greatest beauty.

This height and elegance of the expression, which Mr. Dryden complains of the want of in *Otway*, is the very thing which is condemn'd by the *Essay*, and which could not have been in either the *Orphan*, or *Venice preserv'd*, without robbing them of that nature which he is pleas'd to allow to Mr. Otway, and to prefer to his height and elegance of language. This pompous expression, to give it no worse a name, was brought into *Tragedy* soon after the restoration by Mr. Dryden, and some other poets, by which they did more injury to *Tragedy* than they did good to it, by
their

their nearer approaches to a regularity in other particulars; for that affectation of fine language (as they call it,) and idle descriptions, leads the poets from nature, which ought more to be their study, than those *Dalilabs* of the stage, as *Dryden* calls them, which have given success to plays above these fifty years. The occasion of Mr. *Dryden's* taking up this way, was his great conversation with *French* romances, and little acquaintance with and relish of the true and beautiful simplicity of nature. I have said that Mr. *Dryden*, and the other poets, after the restoration, did more harm to *Tragedy*, than the nearer approaches they made to regularity did good. Those nearer approaches, which I mean, were their reducing a *Tragedy* from many actions to two, and the extravagant excess of time and place, from years and ages, and divers parts of the world, to four and twenty hours, and one town or city, with the adjacent parts. But alas! these nearer approaches were of very little consequence to the just regulation of a *Tragedy*, since they might as well, and with as much reason, have continu'd ten or twenty actions in a play, as have stopt at two, which I think I have sufficiently made out already, as I hope I have the defect of the *unities* of time and place, which remain'd uncorrected by these nearer approaches to regularity, which I have mention'd. Whence it is plain, that *Tragedy* receiv'd but small advantage from the amendments made to it by Mr. *Dryden*, and his other contemporary poets, after the restoration.

But on the other hand, the injury they did to *Tragedy*, by their affectation of what they call fine language, and idle descriptions, remains to this day, and has

debauch'd the taste of the people, to relish a company of worthless scribblers, and give them the name of great poets, meerly for a *diction* that is unnatural, and destructive of all the true beauties of the *tragic* poem, and which is very justly condemn'd by these lines of the *Essay*, but are follow'd by most of our *English* writers of *Tragedy*; because it is much the easier task to become master of a few quaint expressions, and a sonorous *style*, than to form a great *design*, than to compose a just *fable*, than to draw the *manners*, and the *passions*, according to the lineaments of nature, and give them their true *sentiments*: Tho' these are the only marks and proofs of a great poet; the other the little qualities of a *grammarian*, or at most of a *tropological* rhetorician. But to raise the esteem of this latter, Mr. *Dryden*, and some more modern authors, have made use of several arguments, particularly that the *design* is only the *out-lines*, but that the *diction* is the colouring, and the shadows and lights which raise those *out-lines* from their naked flatness to a pleasing roundness and vivacity; and therefore contend that the *colouring* is preferable to the *design*; and by a parallel, which will not hold, that the *diction* is preferable to the *fable*. For *first*, there is not that exact agreement betwixt the colouring in *Painting*, and the *diction* in *Tragedy*, which these gentlemen would persuade us there is. The colouring in *painting* is a part of the imitation, since the *painter* proposes to imitate the objects exactly. Now all the objects of the *pencil* have colour as well as figure, and therefore cannot be exactly imitated without the expression of both; but in a *tragic* poem the matter is much

much different. *Tragedy* is the imitation of an action, that may be justly imitated without the ornaments of *diction*; and very often this imitation is more just without them than with them, as *Aristotle* has many years ago observ'd.

Again, to make the colouring in painting truly valuable, it must vary according to the subject in which it inheres; there must not be the same warm and glowing colours in one figure which there are in another, for that would be contrary to nature, the giving a different appearance to different figures. A languishing and dying figure, as it has not the same appearance in nature with a figure in full health and vigour, so must not the painter give it the same colouring; but our modern poets, who are so fond of this parallel betwixt the *colouring* of painting, and the *diction* of poetry, put into the mouths of all their dramatic persons, whether in grief or anger, hope or despair, joy or love, the same swelling language, contrary to the nature of the passions they ought to express, entirely forgetting what *Horace* long ago told them, that they ought to adapt their language to the fortune and circumstances of the person who speaks; telling them, that when *Telphus* and *Peleus* are in distress and exile, in grief and pain, they must throw aside their pompous and haughty words, if they desire to touch the hearts of the hearers, and that he laughs or sleeps at what is not thus manag'd. And indeed the noble author of the *Essay*, with the highest justice and reason, laughs at the preposterous conduct of our poets in this particular.

But, to make rage declaim, and grief discourse,

From lovers in despair fine things to force,
Must needs succeed ; for who can chuse but pity
A dying hero, miserably witty ?

But oh ! the dialogues, where jest and mock
Is held up like a rest at shittle-cock !

Or else, like bells, eternally they chime ;
They sigh in simile, and die in rhyme.

But tho' these two lines about a *rest at shittle-cock* may seem to belong to *Comedy*, yet any one who has been conversant with the *Tragedies* of about forty years ago, will find many scenes like that between *Tom Thimble*, and *Prince Prettyman*, in the *Rehearsal* ; and about twenty years ago there was a *Tragedy* brought on by a man of figure, in which there was a *toasting* scene, as ridiculous a thing for *Tragedy*, as what these two lines reflect on.

But to return to the colouring in painting. As much as it is cry'd up by *Mons. de Pile*, who has written a treatise on purpose to equal it with, if not prefer it to the *design*, I shall venture to assert, that it is far inferior to it ; and this is my reason : The excellence of the *design* can subsist without the colouring ; but on the other hand, the excellence of the colouring cannot subsist without the *design*, as *Aristotle* long ago observ'd

serv'd in his poeticks. *The finest colours in the world, says he, mixt at random upon a tablet, and not supported by any design or figure, are of no manner of value. All the glowing colouring of Titian, Correggio, or any of the Venetian or Lombard school, put together on a canvas, without any figure, would not be worth the price of the colours from the colour-shop. But a bare sketch, the simple out-lines of a design by Michael Angelo, Raphael, or Julio Romano, will always gain the esteem and admiration of the judicious beholders, and bear a very great price. This is an undeniable argument of the vast preference of the designer to the colourist; and indeed the controversy betwixt colouring and designing in painting is held up with as little reason as betwixt the diction and fable in tragedy; I had almost said, that this controversy is supported in both cases by the ignorant, or at least the half artists, against the most consummate masters and painters of a sovereign genius, as well as poets of a supream perfection.*

Titian finding that he could not equal the great designs of Michael Angelo, Raphael, and others, apply'd himself to the art of colouring, in hopes by that means to rival those other great men; and indeed he gain'd his point, for thus he painted to the many, who were much better judges of the colour than of the design, the first being to be judg'd by the senses, the latter only by reason, and a very great genius. But Titian, besides his great mastery in colouring, was by no means inconsiderable in designing.

Our modern poets, who set up for masters in language, which they are pleas'd to call the colouring of poetry, have not the least claim to that superior quality

quality of designing, and their colours themselves are at most but glaring, not just and natural, because they have been men of no poetic *genius*.

A man may be a very good *grammarian*, and perfectly skill'd in the propriety and elegance of *diction*, and yet be a very silly fellow; but a man cannot be a great master of the designing part of poetry, without a great *genius*, and the being a man of admirable sense. The first employs all his thoughts upon words, or at most upon the turn of a sentence; to do which there seems little more wanting than a good memory, and a tolerable observation of the *styles* of eminent authors. But the latter cannot be done without a capacious soul, a fertile fancy, replenish'd with numberless and wonderful images; without having a perfect idea of nature, consummate knowledge of the *passions*, *manners*, and *habits* of the mind, and a true and masterly judgment, to manage all these with justness and *beauty*.

I know that a certain ingenious author, not long since dead, us'd, in defence of what they call fine language, to urge, that all the *Greek* poets, who were eminent for the *design*, were likewise eminent for the *diction*. Should I grant him this, it would be of no manner of use to his cause, unless he could produce some *Greek* poet who was eminent for the *diction*, and not for the *design*; and ow'd his reputation to the former only. The mischief of it is, that all the *Greek* poets we have yet remaining among us ow'd their fame to their *designs*, and not to their *diction*; nay, *Aristotle*, in his *poetics*, tells us of some *Greek* poets who were very defective in the language, and yet had and merited applause for the exactness of their *fables*.

I pre-

I presume, that from what has been urg'd upon this head, the justice and importance of what has been quoted from the *Essay* is sufficiently evident, that is, that *figures of speech* (as they are us'd by the *English*) are all but paint upon a beauteous face. And,

Art's needless varnish to make nature shine.

I need not say much upon the last of the four lines, viz. *That these figures can only have place in descriptions.* For since it is plain, that they are justly excluded from the rest of the *drama*, if they are not admitted into descriptions, they have no place at all in *Tragedy*. But the precept of *Horace*, and the practice of the ancient *Greek* poets justify that situation which my Lord has allotted them, that is, in descriptions.

Horace, in his *Art of Poetry*, forbidding the representation of things to the spectators, which shock probability, says,

Narret facundia præsens.

Let present eloquence tell or describe them.

That is, the *tragic* poet should eloquently describe those things to the ear, which were not proper to be seen to the eye, or could not be seen without the destruction of the unity of place; and the ancient poets never brought in a description, but upon one of these occasions. For example, the funeral rites perform'd by *Antigone* to the corps of her dead brother *Polynices*, with the hurricane or storm that attended it, could
not

not naturally, and without a breach of the unity of place, be represented on the stage. And yet it being necessary that they should be known, *Sophocles* has made a most eloquent description of them. The death of *Antigone*, *Hamon*, and *Euridice*, were necessary to be known; but a representation of them being contrary to the decorum of the stage, the poet has given them us in two fine descriptions. The same may be said of the death of *Jocasta*, and *OEdipus's* putting out his eyes, in the same poet. It would be endless to quote all that has been done in this kind by *Sophocles* and *Euripides*. There is this remarkable difference betwixt the descriptions in the *Greek* plays, and those that we generally have in ours; those in the *Greeks* were always necessary, and most commonly very pathetic; but the descriptions in our modern *Tragedies* are seldom necessary, and more seldom pathetic; they are generally the idle sports of fancy, and brought in only because the poet has a mind to have a description. But there is nothing more insipid than a meer *otiosa descriptio*, which may be cut out without any detriment to the *Fable*; it is the *Lucus & ara Dianæ*, the *Unus & alter pammus*, complain'd of and condemn'd by *Horace* in his *Art of Poetry*.

This lust of fine language, as they call it, has, like an *ignis fatuus*, misled our authors, wand'ring in the night of ignorance, into strange and monstrous absurdities, which are here observ'd by the *Essay*, that is, to

—make

—make rage declaim, and grief discourse,
 From lovers in despair fine things to force.
 Or e'se, like bells, eternally they chime,
 They sigh in simile, and die in rhyme.

For while sonorous and flowing lines, and a *style* swell'd out with figures and epithets, are the only aim of the writer, these absurdities will certainly follow; because those ends which they propose cannot be obtain'd by, and indeed are inconsistent with the nature, and just draught of the passions, as well as the regular conduct of a noble design. But indeed the consideration of such important things to *Tragedy* as the *fable*, the *characters*, and the *passions*, is what these authors are wholly incapable of. A *simile*, a *metaphor*, an *epithet*, some common-place reflections, and at most an idle description, are their principal aim, the highest ambition of their muse, and the utmost they can perform; and if the getting a full third-day, and the pleasing the great vulgar, and the small, be the true aim of *tragic* writing, they have certainly obtain'd it, for they cannot write more stupidly and more ignorantly than their audience judge. I have many times heard some of the principal frequenters of the *theatre*, who take it very much amiss to have their sense and understanding call'd in question, cry up plays to an extravagant degree. But if you ask them, Pray, gentlemen, what are the beauties of this piece? Is the *fable* masterly? Are the *characters* justly distinguish'd? Are the *manners* truly mark'd? Are the *sentiments* natural? Are the *incidents* well prepar'd? And do they justly produce *terror* and *compassion*,

compassion, as well as the *catastrophe*? They will stare at you full of amazement, and reply, We know not what you mean by these hard questions. But this we know, that the language is wonderfully fine, the similies surprizing and pleasing to the last degree, the descriptions nice, and the reflections divine.

As the audience judges so contemptibly, so the author's task to please it is a matter of very little trouble, for I have known more authors than one, who being furnish'd, either by chance or reading, with three or four *topics*, or common places, like Mr. *Bays*, as many similies, and two or three descriptions, write, as they call it, some tacking *scenes* without order or design, and this they call a *Tragedy*. And 'tis well that you have even these, for there have been many taking plays, or *tragic* interludes without them; but these are trifles, however esteem'd by the many, that cannot deliver their authors, while they labour under numberless absurdities, from this just censure of the *Essay*.

What *Things* are these that would be poets thought?

By nature not inspir'd, nor learning taught!

Some wit they have, and therefore may deserve

'A better course than this, by which they starve.

But to write plays! why? 'tis a bold pretence

To judgment, breeding, wit, and eloquence.

What

What THINGS are these? may seem a very severe expression to our taking *poetasters*; yet it is extremely just, and expresses a judicious indignation against the impudent presumption of those worthless *scribblers*, who have so many years pester'd our stage with their unnatural compositions, and yet would needs be thought poets, tho' they are not *inspir'd by nature*, nor *taught by art*. Nay, tho' they know not so much as the meaning of the very name they aspire to; for if they did that, they would plainly see how unqualified they were to pretend to it. If they knew that, they must be sensible, that to be a smooth *versifier*, a tolerable *grammarian*, and a dabbler in *tropes* and *figures*, could never make them poets; that the name of a poet implies a genius that can form great designs, and which even *Pindar* himself wanted, or at least did not exert it in his younger days; which made that excellent and learned poetess *Corinna* upbraid him with the defect of being a meer *versifier*, full of an harmonious loquacity indeed, affluent in words, and fine language, as we now call it, but ignorant of the *fable*, or the art of designing. This very *Corinna* won the prize six times from *Pindar*; tho' these young *Essays* of this *Theban* poet sufficiently show'd him to be inspir'd by nature, tho' not yet instructed by learning or art.

Homer, the father of the *Greek* poetry, was so eminent for designing, that there never was, and I am afraid never will be, any *fable* so compleat as that of the *Ilias*; and *Julio Romano*, one of the greatest painters of *Italy*, especially in the design, studied *Homer* thoroughly, and learnt that art from his, as *Phidias* and *Euphranor* had done among the *ancients*. This being the meaning of the
name

name poet, and implying qualities so very different from those which we have been able to discover in most of our modern *tragic* poets, the noble author of our *Essay on Poetry* had sufficient reason to cry out;

What Things are these, that would be poets thought?

By nature not inspir'd, nor learning taught!

For a true poet must be inspir'd by nature, must have a great imagination, or pregnant fancy, which to be truly beautiful must be regulated by judgment or learning. For here the word learning means the art of poetry, or that knowledge by which the judgment is form'd and confirm'd; for without this the most extensive fancy is rude and wild, and can produce nothing truly valuable, I mean valuable to those who are in reality the only judges of all poetic performances. From this happy conjunction of nature and art have sprung those wonderful poems of *Homer* and *Virgil*, of *Sophocles* and *Euripides*, and of many more who are lost; and for want of this conjunction, *Shakespear* has been able to give us scarce any thing perfect. The same may be said of *Fletcher*, and almost all the *English tragic* poets, except three or four.

That what I have said here may not look like an affectation of singularity, in espousing the cause of the ancient *tragic* poets, whilst the number is against me; I shall in a few words show, nay, make it evident beyond a contradiction, that the number is of my side.

The ignorant pretenders make a great clamour with their numbers, telling us, that they write to
 please

please the *many*; and indeed all, but some few sower critics, who will not like their modern way of writing. In answer to this I must say, that if numbers are to be insisted upon as the test of excellence, the fautors of the *ancient* manner of writing have a hundred to one the advantage. For on one side stand all the *Greek* nations, from *Thrace* to *Egypt*, for more than fifteen hundred years; add to these the whole *Roman* empire, and all the civiliz'd nations of those ages. But on the other side stand only a few *English* audiences and readers, a company of tasteless, injudicious, northern people, and so far short even in number, that they will not bear the least comparison. Millions of people of the finest taste, and politest literature standing on one side, and only a few country esquires, town wits, overgrown school-boys, trading city, with a thoughtless train of females, without taste, and without literature, on the other; and at the head of these about twenty popular scribblers, who have no other merit but the vain applause they have surpriz'd those into, that I have mention'd, and who are

By nature not inspir'd, nor learning taught.

And indeed deserve no better name than that of THINGS, which the *Essay* has given 'em.

Some wit they have, and therefore may deserve

A better course than this, by which they starve.

This favourable censure, this indulgent allowance of some portion of wit to them, can only justly be claim'd by the erroneous authors of about fifty years

ago. In their works, tho' there was little *dramatic* to be found, yet there were often fine *topics*, and beautiful *families* and *descriptions*. But in our more modern authors (I speak of the pretenders, and not of the true poets) we cannot find any greater pretence to wit, than to the justness of *dramatic* poesy.

Some wit they have; but this, as I have observ'd, reaches not to the popular writers of these last thirty years, for they have none; and it is amazing what it is that has recommended them to the town. But then on the other hand they do not starve by this course, as indeed they ought to do, but thrive by their want of wit, and superlative dulness: For these last six or seven years, not to go farther back, the more insipid and preposterously absurd the plays have been, the more the authors have got by them, from four hundred pounds to fifteen hundred: And the better the plays have been, besides the difficulty of prevailing with the wise managers to get them perform'd, the less encouragement the poets have obtain'd; and I dare be positive, that were there a genius equal to *Orway* now alive, he would find his pieces rejected by the players, whilst the grossest fooleries in nature are caress'd by them.

This excessive gain has, like strong liquor, so intoxicated the brains of these *poetasters*, as to make them vainly assume an imaginary greatness, and self-sufficiency; from which they give themselves the haughty airs of men of superior merit to those who want this kind of success; for they seem of *Hudibras's* opinion,

What's

*What's the worth of any thing,
But as much money as 'twill bring?*

And therefore, that they must have the most worth who get the most money by their writings. Thus they look big, and bluster nine or ten days, and then go out, like a cracker, with a bounce and filthy smell. They and their works indeed are not ill express'd by the following lines of *Shakespear*, which are spoken in *Mackbeth*, in a reflection upon life. They themselves, and their fame, are like

*A poor player,
That frets and struts his hour on the stage;
And then is heard no more.*

For they immediately sink into an eternal oblivion with the rest of their predecessors, who have made as great a noise in this town ever since the setting up an *English* stage. But their works are still better adapted to the remaining part of this reflection of *Shakespear*; for they are exactly, and to a tittle,

*A tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.*

But leaving them to the short enjoyment of their infamous vanity, let us return to the *Essay*.

*But to write plays! why? 'tis a bold pretence
To judgment, breeding, wit, and eloquence.*

In this last line his *Grace* has sum'd up the four qualities that are absolutely necessary in a *dramatic* poet, since there can be nothing fine, nothing worthy of applause, nothing perfect without them. The poet must have a consummate judgment to determine not only in the formation of the *fable*, which is his chief business, but in the draught of the manners or characters, and the passions and sentiments. *Breeding* is likewise necessary; by breeding I mean a conversation with, and perfect knowledge of mankind, with what is proper to every age, sex, degree, station and country; for without this knowledge the poet will perpetually run into monstrous absurdities, which a man of a fine taste will never be able to bear. The want of this breeding or knowledge, which has seldom been conspicuous in our *English* writers, has made our poets never consider the *manners* of the *dramatic* persons in any of these foregoing particulars. For let the scene lie in ever so hot a country, as in *Indostan*, *Sicily*, *Italy*, or *Spain*, the *manners* of the persons are all *English*, as is plain from the *Marriage Alamode*, and the *Aurengezebe* of *Dryden*, many of the plays of *Shakespear*, and almost all those of *Beaumont* and *Fletcher*. These latter poets, as well as most of our more modern writers, have sin'd monstrously, and discover a most profound ignorance in the several distinguishing qualities of *age*, *sex*, and *degree*. What a company of strange fellows are all the kings, and noblemen, in the plays of *Beaumont* and *Fletcher*, who had so little of that *breeding* mention'd in the *Essay*, that their persons have nothing royal or great, nothing agreeable to the characters of kings and noblemen, and would indeed make but a very indifferent figure

figure in any station above a footman, and no extraordinary one even in that? They thought, that to make a king superlatively wicked and tyrannical, was to give a draught of the royal office; which made Mr. Rymer with some astonishment observe, that the poets in the commonwealth of *Athens*, which was no great friend to the regal authority, made the kings of their *tragedies* unfortunate indeed, but not wicked; but that *Beaumont* and *Fletcher*, and other of our poets, writing under a monarchy, fill'd the characters of their kings with the most abandon'd, and most shocking crimes in nature.

As they have us'd the kings in this strange manner, so they have not been more favourable to the characters of the female sex, almost every where making them talk, if not act, like prostitutes, without the least regard to that native modesty which is the allow'd characteristic of that sex, against which not one of the *Greek* poets ever once offended; for the most questionable character, that is extant among their writings, is not stain'd with the least immodesty, I mean that of *Phædra* in *Euripides*. She is guilty indeed of a criminal passion for her son-in-law *Hippolitus*; but then that sprung not from an immodest corruption of her manners, but was inflicted upon her by the anger of *Venus*, and she struggled with it to the utmost of her power. But who can contend with the will of the Gods? she was so far from making her court to *Hippolitus* by any lascivious and lewd allurements, or insinuating declarations of her passion to him, that her very nurse could not find it out, but from some disjointed expressions.

Seneca, who writ a *Tragedy* upon the same subject, most injudiciously robs her of her character of modesty and virtue, making her resolve to declare her love to her son-in-law, notwithstanding all the persuasions of her nurse to the contrary; thus inverting the method of *Euripides*.

Mr. *Dryden*, in the character of *Nourmahal*, strives rather to imitate the *Latin* than the *Greek* poet; and, in imitating him, has made *Nourmahal* in abandon'd lewdness exceed even the *Phadra* of *Seneca*, quite contrary to the characteristic of woman-hood, and much more to that of a great princess. And indeed, I think nothing can equal it but an old practitioner of the hundreds of *Drury*, or *Evadne* in the *Maid's Tragedy* of *Beaumont* and *Fletcher*. These, out of many examples, are sufficient to show the important reason of his *Grace's* establishing *breeding* as a qualification in a dramatic poet, since the want of it has fill'd most of our plays with such shocking monsters, that ignorance cannot excuse, nor good sense forgive.

Wit and *eloquence* are likewise necessary; wit chiefly, if not only in *Comedy*; and *eloquence*, in the narrative descriptions of *Tragedy*.

If we reflect upon what has been said, we should easily conclude, how unqualify'd for this task our young *university sparks* are, who are entirely ignorant of the world, as well as most of the rest of those who have attempted to write for the stage, especially the lady authors, not one of whom can be suppos'd to be mistress of those qualifications here mention'd; tho' without them there can be nothing written truly valuable, or worth reading.

But

But tho' these qualifications are as rare, and uncommon, as they are necessary; yet all these together are not sufficient to compleat a *tragic* poet.

Nay, more; for they must look within, to
find

The secret turns of nature in the mind :

Without this part, in vain would be the whole,

And but a body all without a soul.

It is evident from the context, that this precept of the *Essay* is not directed to every one who has a mind to write a *play*; as if the looking within was sufficient to shew him the *secret turns of nature* here spoken of. But it is directed to those who have a *genius*, judgment, learning, and breeding; for the ignorant, injudicious, and those who want this *breeding* mention'd, can never discover, by their looking within themselves, the true *turns of nature in the mind*. By all their reflections they could never give us any thing beyond their *capacity* and *genius*, and we could only have from them what we have always had, that is, what they themselves thought upon such an occasion, and not *what a man would say in such a case*, who was possess'd with such a certain *passion*, and guided by such and such *manners*, as well as under such and such circumstances; and yet all these are absolutely necessary to the just observation of this precept of the *Essay*. For as, in painting, every passion has several faces, and is express'd by different lines; so in poetry, the senti-

ments of the same *passion* are different, according to the age, degree, and sex, and according to those manners which the poet has given his dramatic person. These are the conditions requir'd by the *Essay* from him who is permitted to *look within*, to find out this soul which is to animate the body of the poem, for without that it could indeed be no more than a lifeless body.

All this together yet is but a part

Of dialogue, that great and powerful art,

Now almost lost, which the old *Grecians* }
knew,

From whom the *Romans* fainter copies drew,

Scarce comprehended since, but by a few.

Plato and *Lucian* are the best remains

Of all the wonders, which this art contains.

Yet to ourselves we justice must allow,

Shakespeare and *Fletcher* are the wonders now.

Consider them, and read them o'er and o'er;

Go see them play'd, then read them as before.

For tho' in many things they grossly fail,

Over our passions still they so prevail,

That

That our own grief by theirs is rock'd asleep;
 The dull are forc'd to feel, the wise to weep.
 Their beauties imitate, avoid their faults.

Tho' a *tragic* dialogue cannot be form'd without that knowledge, and those qualities before mention'd; yet are they, as the *Essay* justly observes, but a part of the art of dialogue; they may and ought to be possess'd by the writer of a narrative, or *epic* poem, and may be so in an accomplish'd manner, without that powerful art of dialogue here requir'd in the *dramatic* poet. For the *epic* poet may express the *passions* and *manners* perfectly well, without a perfect mastery in the *dialogue*. I take this principally to consist in the *diction*, or rather in the manner of the *diction*; for in the *epic* poem, as the sentiments must be the just result of the *manners*, and the *passions*, in regard of the several degrees of them in the persons speaking, or introduc'd; so must the expression, or *diction*, have a proper agreeableness to those sentiments; but then they may be more extended than in the dialogue, where every thing must be close, and exactly agreeable to the nature of the person who speaks; and there must be perpetually kept up that difference between the interlocutors, which their characters demand, to that degree, that the hearer may easily distinguish between the persons speaking, tho' their names be not mention'd. In this I think there is no one excells *Shakespeare*, for we may without difficulty know whether it be *Brutus*, or *Cassius*, whom we hear, tho' the reader take no notice of their names.

We

We every where find a hot impatience, and chole-
 ric eagerness in all that *Cassius* says; but the anger of
Brutus, as it proceeds from the highest sentiments of
 honour and honesty, so it always discovers a sort of
 unwillingness to exert itself. *Cassius* is voluntarily an-
 gry, *Brutus* always forc'd upon it. Nor is there any
 thing in what either says, but what is the natural
 and close consequence of these two states of anger.
 Here are no sentences or reflections thrown in to
 adorn their dispute with what they call *fine things*;
 but each says what a man possess'd with the same
passions, and in the same degree, would naturally ut-
 ter. On the contrary, all the *dialogues* of Mr. *Dry-*
den, at least in his rhiming plays, are stufft with what
 they call *fine things*, and *sentiments* very little akin to
 the *passions* he would be thought to represent; so that
 he might have alter'd almost every line in every one
 of them, without going farther from nature. What
 I say of Mr. *Dryden* will hold good of most of his con-
 temporary writers, and this false way of *dialogue* they
 seem to have taken from *Seneca*, one of the worst *drama-*
tic poets that ever writ in any language; for he knew
 nothing of the *fable*, the *manners*, or the *sentiments*. He
 had indeed a solemn and pompous *diction*, and that
 made him admir'd by our unnatural writers. He was
 continually capping of sentences, and that in the
 warmest of his scenes, which our writers would have
 despis'd, had they been better acquainted with, and
 studied more the *Greek* poets; from them, that is, from
 a constant and diligent reading of them, they would
 have acquir'd a truer taste of the beauties of nature,
 and the powerful art of dialogue.

The

The *Essay* recommends for the art of dialogue *Plato* and *Lucian*, and it has been an objection against it; but *Aristotle* sufficiently justifies the noble author, when he so long ago asserted that the *Socratic* dialogues of *Plato*, and others, are *dramatic*. Tho' we have not so good authority for those of *Lucian*, yet it is plain that they are of the same nature; and the reason, I do suppose, that my Lord *Duke* did not recommend the consideration of *Sophocles* and *Euripides* was, that the works of those poets, or any part of them, were not at that time in either the *French* or the *English* language, whereas those of *Plato* and *Lucian* were in both; so that to have recommended the former, had been to have said nothing, since the precepts of the *Essay* are directed to the instruction only of the *English* writer and reader.

*Yet to our selves we justice must allow,
Shakespear and Fletcher are the wonders now.*

These two lines speak only of the dialogue of *Shakespear*, and in that he is most certainly very excellent, and ought to be thoroughly studied by our writers of the *drama*. How far *Fletcher* may justly claim a share in this eulogy given by the *Essay* to him and *Shakespear* I shall not pretend to determine, but submit it entirely to the superior judgment of the noble Author, putting the reader only in mind, that he does, with the utmost care, avoid their faults, for they are very gross and shocking, especially in the latter.

First,

First, on a plot employ thy careful thoughts;
Turn it, with time, a thousand several ways.

This oft alone has given success to plays.

I have elsewhere, particularly in my compleat *Art of Poetry*, I think sufficiently shown, that the plot not only is the first business of a *dramatic* poet in the order of his progression, in the composition of a play; but that it is likewise chiefly or principally so. For the sense lies thus: The *plot* or *fable* must be first and principally consider'd by the *tragic* poet, before he proceeds to the other parts of his play; because all the other parts are not only of much less consequence, but absolutely necessary to be built upon that.

Turn it, with time, a thousand several ways.

This short precept supposes the author to be acquainted with the beauties, and perfect art of a just *plot* or *fable*, that he knows how to contrive and order this constitution of things, which *Aristotle* calls the *fable*. That is, that he can tell what incidents or events are proper to his subject, and how they are to be manag'd, to give the greater beauty to the piece. The noble Author of the *Essay* supposes therefore, that the person, to whom he writes, is so far already a master of the *art* as to know, that the first thing he is to do, in the forming his *plot* or *fable*, is to fix upon some certain *moral* which he proposes to make out and prove by the *fable*; for unless this be first fix'd, the
poet

poet will perpetually ramble in the dark, without any guide to direct him in his choice of the characters and incidents, of which this *fable* is to consist. But having laid down the *moral*, which he designs to teach, he will with much more ease and certainty find out what characters and incidents are proper and necessary to produce that *moral*. And this is what is meant by

Turn it, with time, a thousand several ways.

That is, thoroughly weigh and consider the characters and incidents you make choice of, and examine them with the nicest scrutiny, how far they are proper to what you propose, and whether they necessarily conduce to your design. If you find either of them defective to this end, alter them with the nicest application and study, 'till they are agreeable to your most sedate judgment. For it is such a *plot*, such a *fable* contrived in this artful manner, that can alone give success to plays, without the other helps of manners, sentiments, and diction, as Aristotle long ago observ'd, and in this particular perfectly agrees with his *Grace*, when he says,

This oft alone has given success to plays.

Reject that vulgar error (which appears
So fair) of making perfect characters.
There's no such thing in nature, and you'll draw
A faultless monster, which the world ne'er saw.

Some

Some faults must be, that his misfortunes
drew;

But such as may deserve compassion too.

These lines contain a precept of the highest importance, since it is against a fault, tho' extremely absurd in itself, and directly contrary to the very design of *Tragedy*, that has yet been so frequent on the *English* stage, as highly to deserve this remark. And this indeed is the only proper place to make it in, since the poet is oblig'd, in the forming of his *fable*, to determine what characters to make use of in it. It is universally known, that the *fable* is an imitation of some one action, and that this action, to be fit for a *tragic* imitation, must be productive of *terror* and *compassion*; but suffering virtue, unhappy innocence, perfection in misery, can produce neither, raising only horror and indignation. The *tragic* imitation being of an action, it is on all sides granted, that action necessarily supposes some persons who act, and those persons who act are what we call the *characters*; and it is from the sufferings of these *characters* only, that *compassion* and *terror* can be deriv'd. It is necessary therefore, that the poet give to these *characters* such *manners* and *qualities* as may naturally produce those sufferings we speak of; they cannot therefore be sovereignly virtuous, nor scandalously vicious. The first would not only be what is not in nature, or, as the *Essay* expresses it,

A faultless monster, which the world ne'er saw.

But

But directly destroys the very end of the *tragic* action; for it can raise neither *pity* nor *terror*, nor can it be of any use in nature, unless it be for the total rejection of all notions of a divine providence, and the fixing the *Epicurean* notion, that the Gods meddle not with the affairs of human kind; which notion is as absurd as impious; for it is impossible to form any idea of God, that can rob him of his omniscience and omnipotence, both which must be concern'd in the administration of human affairs. And I must needs say, that it has always been my opinion, that it is much harder to conceive how an omniscient and omnipotent being can be without a particular providence, than to answer any difficulty that may seem to arise from the opinion of that providence. But the sufferings of perfect innocence make an immediate and impious assault upon the existence of this providence, and produce a most execrable lesson, that it is in vain to be virtuous; since such, as are so, are forsaken by that providence that must by its own nature protect them.

As we have seen by what has been said, that there are no such things as perfect *characters* in nature; so the representation of such on the stage are doubly unfit for *Tragedy*. First, as they are unnatural in themselves; and, Secondly, as they do not produce any *tragic* effect. On the other hand, the *characters* must not be scandalously vicious; for we naturally rejoice at the punishment of the wicked, and no man pities the sufferings of an *Iago*, whom we naturally wish destroy'd, before the poet makes an end of him. Our stage indeed is full of those villainous *characters*, which are properly to be punish'd only by the *hangman*, and not
by

by the poet. And I must confess, that I do believe that these *characters* are more unnatural than those perfectly innocent; or if there are any such in nature, I am sure they have no business in *Tragedy*, where there is nothing to be that will not move either fear or pity; but we fear and pity only such evils which we apprehend may some time fall upon ourselves: We cannot fear these punishments, because we know ourselves guilty of nothing that deserves them; nor can we pity them for the very same reason, and likewise because we naturally rejoice to see such miscreants suffer.

It remains therefore for us to consider what those faults must be in the poetical character, which naturally produce *terror* and *compassion*.

Some faults must be, that his misfortunes drew;
But such as may deserve compassion too.

From whence it is plain, that the *tragic characters*, which are to move *fear* and *pity*, are not to be sovereignly virtuous, nor scandalously wicked; but their faults must be what *Aristotle* calls involuntary, that is, when they become guilty of some crime, by their yielding to the violent impulse of some passion which they ought to have check'd in its rise, and for want of which they are become guilty of a crime they would not else have committed. Now every man is liable to *passions*, and may by them be betray'd to the commission of irregularities, which he would not have known, had he withstood his *passions* in the beginning; and therefore we naturally *pity* and *fear* crimes and punishments which are the immediate

immediate effect of the *passions*, because we are all liable to the same; and these therefore are the faults requir'd by the *Essay*.

*Some faults must be, that his misfortunes drew;
But such as may deserve compassion too.*

I shall venture to take notice of one defect in the principal characters of most of our *plays*, which his *Grace* has not thought fit to mention, and that is, that we commonly chuse some known and particular *heroe*, to illustrate whose character seems to have been the chief business of our poets, which is indeed but a sort of *portrait* drawing; whereas the *tragic* characters ought to be more general, and more like *history-painting*. These poets make it their whole business to adapt every part of the *plot* or *fable*, that is, when there is any *fable*, to the setting off their *heroe*; whereas the true old poets of *Greece* had nothing less in their view. For they, first forming the *moral* and the *fable*, consider'd what characters were proper for the proof of that *fable* and *moral*; and gave them no manners, passions, virtues, or vices, but what the *fable* and *moral* requir'd. *Sophocles*, in his *OEdipus*, propos'd not the adorning and beautifying the character of *OEdipus*; but only made choice of that king, whose passions and faults were proper to produce the more important business of the *moral* and *fable*. Nor did *Homer* himself, from whom *Tragedy* was deriv'd, make choice of *Achilles* to sing his virtues, and to heighten his character; but because the manners of *Achilles* were absolutely necessary to his *design*; he sings the wrath of *Achilles*, and not his great birth, his valour, or any

other heroic virtues, which is a conduct that many of our modern authors, who are such great admirers of perfect heroes, would have pursu'd ; and, like *Statius*, in his *Achilliados*, have pick'd up all his scatter'd virtues and atchievements to aggrandize the character of *Achilles*, without any end or design at all.

I shall venture to add one precept more, tho' not plainly express'd by the *Essay*, since both the former and this are virtually included in the care of the plot, which is enjoin'd by the *Essay*. The *Greek* poets never cram'd into their *tragedies* more persons than were absolutely and indispensably necessary to the carrying on their *fable* ; but our modern poets, like *Mr. Bayes*, are fond of filling the stage with abundance of persons, many of which have nothing to do in the action of the play. The *painters*, when there are more figures in a piece than are absolutely necessary, call them *figures to be let*. The same may be said of the greater number of our dramatic persons in most of our modern plays, they are *figures to be let*, and indeed have nothing to do there.

Besides the main design compos'd with art,
Each moving scene must be a plot apart.

Contrive each little turn, mark every place ;
'As *painters* first chalk out the future face.

Yet be not fondly your own slave for this,
But change hereafter what appears amiss.

The *Essay* does not mean by this, that the scenes of the *Tragedy* are to be a different *plot* from the *fable*; there can be nothing more distant from his intentions, who always thinks justly in what he says, and can therefore by no means be thought to offer so absurd an injunction; but his *Grace* designs, by these words, only to inform the poet, that, in the drawing the plan of his *Tragedy*, he must not be satisfy'd with the out-lines of the *fable*, the *characters*, and the *incidents*. But since from the *fable*, the *characters* and several scenes of passion do naturally and unavoidably proceed, it belongs to the poet's prudence, that he may not want a guide in his writing, but always have before his eyes what he is to do, to chalk out the several turns, and whole course of the passion and business of every one of those scenes, so that they may not deviate from the main design of the *fable*, or from the nature of the *passion* that is drawn in each, which the poet would be apt to do, should he leave the full consideration of every scene to the time of his writing it. As for example: There is no doubt, but that *Euripides*, when he form'd in his mind that admirable scene betwixt *Agamemnon* and *Menelaus*, which I have given the reader before, mark'd out in his plan the whole course of it, and every place where those fine turns of the passion were to come in, which we find in that excellent *scene*; and this is that *plot* apart which his *Grace* designs. 'Tis true, that the word *plot*, in the common acceptation, means the *fable*, but in reality it likewise signifies a *design* or *contrivance*, and in this last sense it is here to be taken. I might even say the same of the scene of *Brutus* and *Cassius*, where tho' there is but one turn, yet the risings and

fallings of the anger between them might very well have been mark'd out before a word of it was written. This consideration will hold good through all scenes, whether of love, grief, joy, rage, or despair.

But then the poet is not to be his *own slave for this*, that is, he must not be so bound up to his first draught, as to make no alterations in it when he comes to write, tho' he shall find sufficient cause for the doing of it. The draught of the fable, the characters, the incidents and passion, which includes the particular scenes we have been speaking of, is the work of a sedate judgment. But when the poet comes to write, he is often elevated by the warmth of fancy above the cooler considerations of judgment, and hits upon some extraordinary thing in one happy moment, which the calmer reflections of hours would never have produc'd. Thus *Virgil*, in the sixth book, speaking of *Misenus* the trumpeter, says,

—*Quo non praestantior alter,*

Aere ciere viros—

And there stopt in his first copy. But in reading it to *Augustus*, a sudden fury seiz'd him, and he thus fill'd up the *hemistich*.

—*Martemque accendere cantu.*

This is sufficient to explain his *Grace's* meaning, when he says,

*Yet be not fondly your own slave for this ;
But change hereafter what appears amiss.*

Think not so much where shining thoughts
to place,

As what a man would say in such a case.

That is, what a man in such circumstances, possess'd with such passions, and urg'd in such a manner, would think upon such an occasion. But of this I have said enough already,

Neither in Comedy will this suffice ;
The player too must be before your eyes.
And tho' 'tis drudgery to stoop so low,
To him you must your secret meaning show.

His *Grace*, having gone through all those precepts which he has thought fit to add, with the finest taste in the world, to those common and known rules of *Tragedy* which we find in *Aristotle*, proceeds now to some few considerations upon *Comedy*, which are not less just and curious than those he has given us upon *Tragedy*. The *first* indeed cannot be call'd a precept of writing, but is certainly so of prudence, since so much depends upon the actor in the representation.

The *next* is of a more important nature, as being directed to the instruction of the writer, that he may avoid a fault too frequent in our *comic* poets.

Expose no single fop, but lay the load
 More equally, and spread the folly broad :
 Meer coxcombs are too obvious ; oft we see
 A fool derided by as bad as he.
 Hawks fly at nobler game ; in this low way
 A very owl may prove a bird of prey.
 Small poets so will one poor fop devour.
 But to collect, like bees, from every flower
 Ingredients to compose this precious juice,
 Which serves the world for pleasure, and for use,
 In spite of faction, this would favour get,
 But † *Falstaff* stands unimitated yet.

'Tis certain, that the *Essay* is here perfectly and
 visibly in the right, for a *comic* character can never be
 valuable, that is not general ; those that are only
 particular yield no instruction. And it was a very
 odd defence that I heard a great poet once give for
 the *Morose* of *Ben Johnson*, which was, that *Ben* knew
 a certain person of that extravagant humour. But
Ben was too judicious a poet to take the single extra-
 vagance of any one person, to be a just character
 for a *comic* representation. The ingenious Mr. Con-
 greve,

† An admirable character in a play of *Shakspear*.

grave, in his letter to Mr. Dennis about *humour*, gives a much better defence of *Ben* upon this head, and evidently proves, that *Morose* is not a particular, but general character, as his words will show.

The character of Morose, in the Silent Woman, I take to be a character of humour, and I chuse to instance this character to you from many others of the same author, because I know it has been condemn'd by many as unnatural, and farce; and you have your self hinted some dislike of it, for the same reason, in a letter to me concerning some of Johnson's plays.

Let us suppose Morose to be a man naturally splenetic and melancholy; is there any thing more offensive to one of such a disposition, than noise and clamour? Let any man that has the spleen (and there are enough in England) be judge. We see common examples of this humour in little every day. 'Tis ten to one but three parts in four of the company that you dine with are discompos'd and startled at the cutting of a cork, or scratching a plate with a knife. It is a proportion of the same humour, that makes such, or any other noise, offensive to the person that hears it; for there are others who will not be disturb'd at all by it. Well! but Morose you will say is so extravagant, he cannot bear any discourse or conversation above a whisper. Why, it is his excess of this humour that makes him become ridiculous, and qualifies his character for Comedy. If the poet had given him but a moderate proportion of that humour, 'tis odds but half the audience would have sided with the character, and have condemn'd the author for exposing a humour, which was neither remarkable nor ridiculous. Besides, the distance of the stage requires the figure represented to be something lar-

ger than the life ; and sure a picture may have features larger in proportion, and yet be very like the original. If this exactness of quantity were to be observ'd in wit, as some would have it in humour, what would become of those characters that are design'd for men of wit ? I believe, if a poet should steal a dialogue of any length from the extempore discourse of the two wittiest men upon earth, he would find the scene but coldly receiv'd by the town.

From hence 'tis plain, that *Morose* is not a particular, but a general character, as I have observ'd ; and the same may be said of almost all the characters of *Ben Johnson*, and indeed of every character of any other comic poet that is truly valuable. It is no difficult matter for a fellow of a very shallow understanding, to make sport with some particular character, and expose on the stage some particular person, that is not so great a fool as the author who exposes him. But it is only the talent of a great genius to form, from the various follies of many, one comic character truly ridiculous and useful, which, when done, will always find applause from the judicious at least, if not from the *million* ; or to put it in his *Grace's* words :

*But to collect, like bees, from every flower
Ingredients to compose this precious juice,
Which serves the world for pleasure, and for use,
In spite of faction, this would favour get.
But Falstaff stands unimitated yet.*

Another

Another fault, which often does befall,
 Is when the wit of some great poet shall
 So overflow, that is, be none at all,
 That ev'n his fools speak sense, as if possess'd,
 And each by inspiration breaks his jest.
 If once the justness of each part be lost,
 Well may we laugh, but at the poet's cost.

This precept, tho' extremely just for the time it was given in, seems of little necessity now; for about fifteen years after the restoration, all was gay, all sprightly, and vivacious, and wit every where abounded; the very statesmen were so fond of it, that, as Sir *William Temple* observes, many of them had much rather have been taken notice of for saying a witty thing, than for doing a wise one. This spirit of wit, that was diffus'd so generally through the brisker sort, had likewise taken possession of the writers of the greatest fame so far, that they were fonder of saying a witty thing in their *Comedies*, than a just one. Among these poets there was none more eminent than the author of the *Country-Wife*, and *Plain-Dealer*, nor any one who sinn'd more against this precept, as is plain from the characters of *Novel*, the Lord *Plausible*, and even the very *Tars*, by which the justness of the characters was lost; and so he grew a very faulty writer, even by the excess of his wit; for of him it is certainly true,

That

*That ev'n his fools spoke sense, as if posselt,
And each by inspiration broke his jest.*

Tho' I see no great fear of the like offence in any of our present poets, yet many have been guilty of endeavouring to do it in their aukward way, by a sort of pert *chit-chat*; which as often leads them out of the character, without the amends of fine wit and reflection, as these did the poets animadverted on in this place by the *Essay*. Among many plays of this kind I shall take notice only of two, *viz.* the *Careless Husband* and the *Chit-chat*, the several authors of those two plays having little regard to humour, tho' the principal business of *Comedy*, as knowing little of it; they were persons of fashion, and very well acquainted with a genteel conversation, and therefore it was no difficult matter for them to give us a draught of it.

Menander us'd to say, that when he had form'd his plot, he look'd upon his comedy as three parts finish'd; but *Menander* and these gentlemen had very different ideas of dramatic writing; for the plots of the two plays I have mention'd cou'd not in probability take up above half an hour in their formation; and this is the general fault of all those plays which they call genteel comedies, a thing utterly unknown to the *ancients*, and even to that great master of the *Joc*, *Ben Johnson*, which naturally brings in the next lines of the *Essay*.

That silly thing men call sheer wit avoid,
With which our age so nauseously is cloy'd;

Humour's

Humour's the main, wit should be only brought;
To turn agreeably some proper thought.

There is nothing more just than this observation, that humour is the main thing in *comedy*, especially in *English* comedy. Mr. Congreve and Sir William Temple make it of *English* growth, and the natural effect of the freedom of our people. Whether there was any such thing in the *Greek* poets of the new comedy (for in the old there is nothing to be found of it) I know not, yet from the same freedom which has given birth to it in *England*, we may reasonably suppose that *Menander* was not without it; because the *Athenian* people, and indeed almost all the *Grecians*, had full as great liberty as the *English* can pretend to; nay, in my opinion, a much greater; and perhaps this was the *vis comica* which *Julius Caesar* complains was wanting in *Terence*, who, tho' he took all his plays from *Menander*, by injudiciously clapping two *Greek comedies* into one *Latin* one, could not transfuse the humour or *vis comica* of the *Grecian* into his writings, which made the same *Julius Caesar* call him *dimidium Menandri*, the half of *Menander*.

But be this as it will, for I own it a meer conjecture, it is not much to our purpose.

Humour being so necessary to comedy, it may perhaps be thought requisite that I should here determine what humour is; but since so great a master of the comic genius, as Mr. Congreve, will not, in his letter to Mr. Dennis on this subject, pretend to give any definition of it, but on the contrary declares all such definitions to be impracticable; I shall not presume to venture on a province which he
has

has declin'd; and yet I cannot help saying a few words about it, which perhaps may be look'd upon to be little less. What I have to say therefore, is, that at least the most valuable and entertaining humour is not without a mixture of some of the *passions*; every *passion* (as I have elsewhere observ'd) has two faces, one serious, and the other ridiculous; the serious is appropriated to *Tragedy*, the ridiculous to *Comedy*. An example will make this plainer: There is no passion more violent and *tragic* than *anger*, nor less liable to provoke laughter, if it is void of some extravagances thrust upon it by the fantastical rants in several of our modern plays: Let any one read but the first scene of the *Alchymist*, and he will find that the *anger* between *Face* and *Subile* is perfectly ridiculous; the same may be said of *joy*, and the other *passions*. But without any definition or attempt that way, I think that whoever designs to write comedy, should, by a thorough conversation with, and study of our most celebrated comic writings, arrive at a true taste in this particular. I have elsewhere recommended the consideration of *Randolph's Muscs Looking-glass*, and do so here again, verily believing that it will be of great use to him.

But, since the poets, we of late have known,
 Shine in no dress so much as in their own;
 The better by example to convince,
 Cast but a view on this wrong side of sense,
 First, a soliloquy is calmly made,
 Where every reason is exactly weigh'd;

Which

Which once perform'd, most opportunely comes
 Some hero frighted at the noise of drums,
 For her sweet sake, whom at first sight he loves;
 And all in metaphor his passion proves:
 But some sad accident, tho' yet unknown,
 Parting this pair, to leave the swain alone,
 He strait grows jealous, tho' we know not
 [why;
 Then, to oblige his rival, needs will die.
 But first he makes a speech, wherein he tells
 The absent nymph, how much his flame excels;
 And yet bequeaths her generously now
 To that lov'd man, (whom yet he scarce does
 [know,)
 Who strait appears (but who can fate with-
 [stand?)
 Too late, alas, to hold his hasty hand,
 That just has given himself the cruel stroke,
 At which his very rival's heart is broke;
 Who more to his new friend, than mistress kind,
 Most sadly mourns at being left behind;
 Of such a death prefers the pleasing charms
 To love, and living in his lady's arms.

Tho' this ridicule of the fantastical tragedies of king
 Charles

Charles the second's time may be thought less just upon those of our days; yet I dare assert, that most of it will reach even these, and that whatever folly is here ridicul'd that is not to be found in our more modern plays, they contain absurdities full as great and numerous.

How shameful, and what monstrous things
[are these?

'And then they rail at those they cannot please;
Conclude us only partial for the dead;
'And grudge the sign of old *Ben Johnson's* head.

The authors of these shameful and monstrous things, or things as shameful and monstrous, are the principal men who rail at the rules of writing, for they are against the rules, because the rules are against them; and I am sure I may be positive, that there is not one author of any one nation that has written against *Aristotle*, whose works have not been condemn'd by the precepts of that philosopher. I shall instance only in three, *Corneille* in *France*, *Lopez de Vega* in *Spain*, and *Sir Richard Blackmore* in *England*. I pass over the little scribblers, for they bark at *Aristotle*, because they do not understand him; but that is not the case of the three whom I have named, who are men eminent for learning and parts, and who have chosen rather to oppose *Aristotle*, and the known and establish'd rules of art, than to take pains to correct or avoid those errors which they have been guilty of in their works against them. *Mons. Dacier* has sufficiently confuted *Corneille*,
and

Verse will seem prose; yet often on him look;
 And you will hardly need another book.
 Had * *Bossu* never writ, the world had still,
 Like *Indians*, view'd this wondrous piece of
 [skill,
 As something of divine, the work admir'd;
 Not hop'd to be instructed, but inspir'd.
 But he, disclosing sacred mysteries,
 Has shewn where all the mighty magic lies;
 Describ'd the seeds, and in what order sown,
 That have to such a vast proportion grown.
 Sure, from some angel he the secret knew,
 Who through this labyrinth has given the clue!
 But what, alas, avails it poor mankind,
 To see this promised land, yet stay behind?
 The way is shewn, but who has strength to go?
 What skilful bard does every science know?
 Whose fancy flies beyond weak reason's sight,
 And yet has judgment to direct it right?
 Whose just discernment, *Virgil*-like, is such,
 Never to say too little, or too much?
 Let such a man begin without delay;
 But he must do beyond what I can say;
 Must above *Milton's* lofty flights prevail,
 Succeed where *Spenser*, and *Torquato* fail.

All that the noble author of the *Essay* has been pleas'd to say in the foregoing verses, is a most elegant and just praise of the *epic* poem, and its principal (I had almost said only) author *Homer*. That the *epic* poem is the greatest performance of the wit of man, I think has never yet been controverted. *Tragedy*, the next excellent to it, brings all its lessons to teach those moral duties that are necessary to the happy conduct of private life; but the lessons taught by the *epic* poem are political, and direct the conduct of states and kingdoms: As much therefore as the importance of the latter is greater than that of the former, so much does the *Epopœia* excel the *tragic* poem.

But tho' this preheminance of the *Epopœia* be not disputed by any of our modern cavillers against the *Ancients*; yet in these latter times *Homer*, the father of this admirable sort of poem, has been often attack'd as extremely defective; and very much short of those things, to which the name of *epic* poem has been given by their authors. It would be endless, at least very tedious, to remark upon all of them; yet since the justification of *Homer* includes the justification of that elegant eulogy of the *Essay* upon him, I think myself obliged to answer the objections brought by Sir *Richard Blackmore* against him and *Virgil*, in his *Essay* upon *epic* poetry.

If Sir *Richard* had considered what the polite world has gain'd by the *Ilias* and *Odysses* of *Homer*, to say nothing of *Virgil* in this place, I fancy that he had left the remains of the immortal *Homer* undisturb'd by cavils so very injudicious, that I am sorry to find

them in his writings. If he had studied *Homer* thoroughly in all his parts, he would have seen the foundation and excellence of every province of poetry is deriv'd from *Homer*; first, the *epic* poem, then *tragedy*, *comedy*, the *elegy* and *lyric*; that he has taught great generals conduct in war, wise legislators wholesome institutes in peace, eloquence to the greatest orators in the world, and the art of designing to the most celebrated painters and sculptors both of *Greece* and *Italy*; since he has excell'd all the *philosophers* in teaching the most valuable part of *philosophy*, MORALITY; since all the *Greek* grammarians learnt their art from him, and all the youth of those polite countries received their first impressions of virtue and knowledge from the study of his works.

Sure I say, if Sir *Richard* had but considered these things, he would have had more modesty, at least would have us'd more caution, than in so open a manner, and meerly upon his own single authority, to have endeavour'd to lessen so universally acknowledged a character of excellence in all valuable literature. But indeed he has given *Homer* his revenge, when, in the very same book where he is condemn'd, we find an author extoll'd for the greatest genius in *tragedy*, both of this, or any other nation or age, who has not the least, no not one single quality of a truly *tragic* genius; but when we once forsake evident truth, we wander into strange absurdities. That what I have said may not seem to be *gratis dictum*, I shall proceed to a short examination of what Sir *Richard* has offer'd.

It is a very fallacious way of fixing the nature of a poem on the etymology of the term or name by which it is called. Thus Sir Richard Blackmore, in his *Essay* upon *epic* poetry, endeavours to give us the nature of that poem from the term *epos*, without consulting the opinion and notion of the *ancients*, from whom we derive the term of *epopæia*, by that to see what they meant by it.

To see how ridiculous this is, we need but consider the term *tragedy*; for should we take the design of that poem to be the meaning of the original word, it must relate to nothing but *goats*, for *tragædia* signifies the *goat* song.

Mr. Addison in the *Spectators*, in his *criticisms* upon *Milton*, seems to have mistaken the matter, in endeavouring to bring that poem to the rules of the *epopæia*, which cannot be done; and led by the same error, Sir Richard Blackmore endeavours to defend that great poet by his own rules of the *epopæia*; but they are both mistaken; it is not an heroic poem, but a divine one, and indeed a new species. It is plain that the proposition of all the heroic poems of the *ancients* mentions some one person as the subject of their poem. Thus *Homer* begins his *Ilias*, by proposing to sing the anger of *Achilles*; and his *Odyssey* begins,

*Muse, speak the man, who, since the siege of Troy,
So many towns, such change of manners saw.*

And *Virgil* begins his *Æneis* with,

Arms and the man I sing, &c.

But *Milton* begins his poem of things, and not of men ; as,

*Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, 'till one greater man
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
Sing, heavenly muse.*

I am surpriz'd, that a person, who pretends to a stronger and clearer reason than *Aristotle*, should, however, so grossly fail, as *Sir Richard Blackmore* has done in his *Essay* upon epic poetry, of which he seems no where to have a just notion ; particularly, when he says, that if *Horace* knew the subject of *Homer's* poem, it was the *Trojan* war ; whereas he had no occasion to have recourse to *Horace* for *Homer's* subject, since he himself tells us, in the very first lines of his *Ilias* and his *Odyssees*, what his subject of each poem is, viz. the anger of *Achilles*, and its fatal consequences, in the *Ilias* ; and the travels or voyages of *Ulysses*, in that of the *Odyssees*. A just consideration of this would not only have prevented his weak aspersions of the immortal *Homer*, but plainly have show'd him, that his design and subject of his poem was not the *Trojan* war, but one event only of it, and that of the highest importance, that is, the anger of *Achilles*, and his quarrel

quarrel with *Agamemnon*; by which he shows the fatal consequences of a disunion of confederated powers; and therefore the necessity of a perfect good understanding between the *Greek* states in their wars with the great *King*, whose formidable power was too mighty to be resisted by any one particular state of *Greece*, and therefore that it was absolutely necessary, for the common safety of the *Greeks*, to unite their several powers into one body against the common enemy: And if *Sir Richard Blackmore* had consider'd this, he would not have found fault with *Homer* for continuing his poem beyond the death of *Hector*; for 'till the funeral rights of *Patroclus* were celebrated, and *Achilles* entirely pacified by the complaints and petition of *Priam*, the anger of *Achilles* was not entirely at an end; and if *Homer* had left off his poem before those two particulars, he had not made his action compleat, because the tranquility of *Achilles* was not restored to that state in which the beginning of it found him. I confess that *Horace*, in his epistle to *Lollius*, does not directly consider the main or principal end of *Homer's* poem; but other accidental doctrines which may be drawn from it; for in the execution of one great design, 'tis impossible but that many important lessons may be learnt from it distinct from the chief and principal end of the poem. Thus in the *OEdipus* of *Sophocles*, the moral is to show that no man is entirely happy before death; but then to prove this moral, it was necessary to give *OEdipus* such faults and follies as we find he has: And the ill effects of those faults and follies afford another lesson distinct from the gene-

ral *moral* of the *Tragedy*, that is, his obstinacy, curiosity and *choler*, which warn us to have a care of them, since they were productive of so many evils to those who were possess'd by them; and this has made *Plutarch* give us another *moral* of the *OEdipus*, than that which *Sophocles* has deliver'd in that *Tragedy*: And thus *Horace*, in his consideration of *Homer*, has had regard more to the particular lessons which reach every man, than to that grand and sublime doctrine which was *Homer's* chief and principal aim, and which only regards the public good; for these are his words to *Lollius*:

Trojani belli scriptorem, maxime Lolli,
Dum tu declamas Romæ, Præneste relegi:
Qui, quid sit pulchrum, quid turpe, quid utile, quid non,
Plenius ac melius Chrysippo & Crantore dicit.

And so on, which is no more than to say that *Homer* teaches us moral lessons fuller and better than the *philosophers*. But it does not follow, that he calls *Homer* the writer of the *Trojan* war, any otherwise than as the subject of his poem was one event of that war, and the scene of his action lay at the siege of *Troy*. *Horace* knew very well, that the subject of an *epic*, as well as a dramatic poem, could be but one action; but the *Trojan* war could not properly and strictly be call'd one action, to which *Homer* has no farther regard in his *Ilias*, than as it was interwoven with the anger of *Achilles*, which alone was the subject of his poem. There is the same error in *Mr. Dryden's* preface to *du Fresnoy*.

Sir *Richard Blackmore* is for giving us new rules of epic poetry, and begins with a great parade of words against the rules of *Aristotle*, and would have it, because some part of that great man's philosophy was at last rejected by the *modern* philosophers, as *des Cartes* and others, that we ought therefore to throw aside likewise his precepts in the art of poetry. But this learned gentleman has not sufficiently consider'd the reason of this rejection of those parts of *Aristotle's* philosophy, nor indeed the occasion of their original establishment in the schools, which was not from the demonstration and evident principles of that philosopher's doctrines; but because chiefly they contributed to prove those corrupt principles of religion, which the *Romish* church had brought in and fix'd as the fundamental articles of faith, and which was the reason that the schoolmen of those times rejected *Plato*, and chose *Aristotle*.

Aristotle in his metaphysics distinguishes betwixt the appearance or accidents, and the subjects in which they inhere; but this by the way of abstraction only, and not as if he suppos'd it to be in reality. This distinction hit the business of transubstantiation, and it was for that reason only, that the schoolmen fix'd his authority, or *ipse dixit*, and not from the universal consent of all men, and in all ages and nations where his philosophy had appear'd; so that the instance which Sir *Richard* gives is very defective, not to say unfair, when he puts that, which was forc'd upon mankind, on the same bottom with what was voluntarily receiv'd, from the evidence of the truth and reason that was found in those works of *A-*

ristotle, that have met with that universal approbation which his *poetics*, his *rhethorics*, his *politics*, and his *ethics* have found. If Sir *Richard* had sufficiently consider'd what *Monf. Dacier* says in his preface to his notes on *Aristotle's poetics*, he would not have said one word of what he has offer'd against the *Stagyrite*, or else at least he would have found it necessary to have fully and clearly answer'd all that *Dacier* has said on that subject, of which he has been pleas'd to take no manner of notice; so that the reasons of the *French critic* remain in full force, and those of Sir *Richard* fall to the ground, without any manner of value or efficacy. One would have thought that after he had made such an harangue against *Aristotle*, he should at least have excell'd him in the plainness, clearness, simplicity, and evidence of his principles, for all those qualities are every where visible in what *Aristotle* delivers; but I am afraid we cannot say so of what this *modern* author has thought fit to give us. There is nothing so common thro' his whole *Essay*, tho' upon a didactic subject, as a sort of pindaric, digressive, or rambling manner; he gives you in the titles of several heads some certain point, and part, as the *fable*; where one would imagine that he should only treat of that part of the poem, and show its excellencies and defects; instead of that, we have little more than the very title, and a ramble from that, thro' all the parts of the poem, even to the diction.

How Sir *Richard* cou'd fancy that *Horace* made the *Trojan* war the subject of *Homer's* poem from the first line of his letter to *Lollius*, I can't imagine: 'Tis true, he says that he has read over the writer of the *Tro-*

jan war ; but that does not determine, that that was the subject of his poem. It is sufficient to justify *Horace*, that he might be call'd the writer of the *Trojan* war, as the subject of his poem was a remarkable event of that war. Methinks Sir *Richard* might rather have fix'd the subject of *Homer's* poem to the love of *Paris*, since in the same letters to *Lollins*, distinguishing the two poems of *Homer*, he says of the *Ilias* :

Paridis propter narratur amorem, &c.

But here is another remarkable difference, that *Horace* here speaks of the *Odyssees* as well as the *Ilias*, and by consequence calls the return of *Ulysses* the *Trojan* war, as well as the anger of *Achilles*; tho' the whole subject of the *Odyssees* be after the destruction of *Troy*; so that he might have found out a great many more faults in *Homer*, than he has been pleas'd to coin, on the false supposition that the *Trojan* war was his subject; because he says very little about *Paris* and his love.

But what occasion had he to seek, as I have said, for the subject of *Homer* in *Horace*, or any one else, since *Homer* himself tells us, in the very first lines of his poem, that his subject was the anger of *Achilles*? And then it is plain, that all the faults he has urg'd against that great Poet are of no manner of force or consideration; for the anger of *Achilles* was not fully appeas'd 'till the celebration of the funeral rites of *Patroclus* was over, and *Priam* had by his prayers and tears vanquish'd the remains of his revenge and
anger,

anger, by obtaining the body of *Hector*, as I have just before observ'd.

There is this material difference betwixt *Homer* and all the other poets who have written, or pretended to write *epic* poems, both *antient* and *modern*, and much to the advantage of the blind *Grecian* bard : All the other *epic* poets have made it their business to celebrate, by their poems, either some particular *hero* or *heroes*, or some remarkable event in history, which gives 'em very little advantage above the *romances* of our latter times. But *Homer* does not propose to celebrate any *hero*, how eminent soever ; and *Achilles*, *Agamemnon*, *Ulysses*, and the rest, that shine in his two poems, are only introduc'd to prove and establish the two important lessons he design'd to teach his countrymen, of which that of the *Ilias* is much of the greater importance, and that so great, that it is almost impossible to find any one equal to it ; for it was to shew them that union was absolutely necessary to give success to confederated powers. And this was of the more consequence to *Greece* ; because the *Grecians* were a people divided into many petty states enjoying a happy liberty, which they could never preserve against the exorbitant power of the great king of *Persia*, but by a firm union among themselves, by shewing, that when they were so united, they bore down the greatest power of *Asia* ; but when they admitted discord, their enemies prevail'd ; and, by the example of the war of *Troy*, endeavour'd to convince them, that whenever *Greece* should firmly unite, they would always be an over-match for the *Asiatic* powers ; so that the lesson, which *Homer* undertook to teach by his *Ilias*,
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reach'd to the preservation of the liberties and happiness of all the *Grecian* states. To this purpose he chose to sing the anger of *Achilles*, and the ill effects of his quarrel with *Agamemnon*, but not *Achilles* himself, his valour or noble achievements; those are only made use of as the best means of proving the lesson he propos'd to teach.

Sir *Richard*'s objections against *Virgil* seem founded on no better a ground than what he has urged against *Homer*, particularly in two things; first, in his hero's ingratitude to *Dido*; the other, his seeking help from *Evander*, the head, or king of a *Greek* colony in *Italy*, tho' a *Trojan*. As for the first, I cannot but smile at Sir *Richard*'s accusation of *Æneas* for forsaking of *Dido*. It may not, perhaps, be so gallant, so *en Chevalier*, as might be agreeable to a modern romance; but Sir *Richard* should know, and I believe, if his business had not been to load *Virgil* as well as *Homer* with faults to excuse his own, he does know, that modern customs and manners are not the rules of judging of those of antiquity, when the punctilios of *French* breeding were not known in the world. And we find that *Æneas* was not the only hero of antiquity who forsook a fair lady that had doated upon him. *Theseus*, the companion of *Hercules* himself, and a hero of the first magnitude, forsook *Ariadne*, after she had lent him the clue to pass the labyrinth that contain'd the *Minotaur*, by which she not only sav'd his life, and deliver'd *Athens* from the yearly tribute of a human sacrifice to that monster, but fled also with him from her father's court to accompany him home. But what did this great hero do? why, left the poor dis-

consolate

consolate lady in the isle of *Naxos*, where she might have dy'd of despair for her fugitive lover, had not the god *Bacchus* come and apply'd a more agreeable remedy to her sufferings.

Jason, the head of the *Argonauts*, after *Medea* had deliver'd him from all the danger he was to go thro' to obtain and carry off the golden fleece from *Colchus*, took her with him into *Greece*; but there, in a strange country, he forsook her for *Crensa* the daughter of *Creon* king of *Corinth*; and 'tis observable, that *Euripides*, in his tragedy of *Medea*, puts such a justification of what he had done in the mouth of *Jason*, as shews, that this infidelity of the lover to his mistress was not such a crime in the opinion of those times, as *Sir Richard Blackmore* would make the deserting of *Dido* to be in *Aeneas*; for indeed women in those parts of the world, and those times, were not of that importance that they are made to be in the *French* romances; but this is not the only, nor indeed the principal defence of *Virgil* in this particular. *Sir Richard* would have been but just to this great Poet, if he had fairly consider'd the whole case, as we find it in the poem itself; he would have found there, that there were some higher agents concern'd in all this matter than *Dido* and *Aeneas*. And here it is necessary to consider the then receiv'd notion of the gods, among which we know that the gods and goddesses could not hinder the actions of each other. This being premis'd, we must remember that *Juno*, out of an implacable hatred to the *Trojan* race, had fatigu'd and persecuted *Aeneas*, and driven him to great distresses thro' his whole voyage, and at last rais'd

rais'd a great storm, by which, tho' she could not destroy him and his followers, they were all driven upon the *African* coast. *Venus*, the Mother of *Æneas*, being as watchful for the safety of her son as *Juno* was for his destruction, raises that passion of love in *Dido's* breast, who was a particular servant and favourite of *Juno's*, to secure *Æneas* against the treachery or cruelty of a people whom she had no great reason to hope would be very favourable to him, or his. So it was to this passion of *Dido*, rais'd by the goddess *Venus*, and not to her disinterested compassion or hospitality, that *Æneas* ow'd his preservation, and that of his companions, at least the continuance of it. 'Tis true indeed, she says,

Non ignara mali miseris succurrere disco.

But how long that had continu'd without this stratagem of *Venus*, that goddess, and even *Mercury* himself, afterwards seem'd very much to doubt, from the natural inconstancy and deceitful temper of that people; the *Punica fides* was certainly in *Virgil's* Eye; but however, *Æneas* is still excusable; for he did not leave *Dido* but in perfect obedience to the gods; and *Mercury* himself was fain to come down from *Jupiter* with his commands, before he could resolve to leave a woman who had oblig'd and lov'd him; and it was the good of his people, and his piety to heaven, which made him at last accomplish it.

Now as for the business of *Evander*, it was no such absurdity in *Virgil*, to make *Æneas* seek help from him, tho' a *Grecian*; because their interest seems here united;

ted; they are both foreigners, and the heads of two foreign settlements, whose mutual security was in the strengthening themselves against the natives of the place.

Statius and *Lucan* begin their poems very differently from *Homer* and *Virgil*. *Lucan* begins thus :

*Bella per Emathios plusquam civilia campos;
Iusque datum sceleri, canimus, populumque potentem
In sua victrici conversum viscera dextra.*

And *Statius* begins thus :

*Fraternas acies, alternaque bella profanis
Decertata odiis, &c.*

Thus neither of 'em sings the man, or single *heroe*; but the war; and so indeed neither of 'em have any *heroe* at all, properly speaking. *Statius* has at least six, if not more, and all of 'em unfortunate. *Cato*, I think, is the only *heroe* of *Lucan*, or at least the principal; but what lesson do these poets give us by their poems? None, that I know of, or at least none that are valuable, and fit to be thought on, nor indeed can any unfortunate *heroe* of an *epic* poem afford any.

'Tis true, that these are but disjointed hints, and not a full and thorough examination of all Sir *Richard* has offer'd in the *Essay* above-quoted; but then, as disjointed as they are, their connection is as full and strong as the discourse they are directed against, the importance of which is not great enough to require a more exact and methodical answer; but when Sir *Richard*

chard has evidently and fully confuted *Aristotle*, *Bossu*, *Monf. Dacier* in his preface to *Aristotle's* poetics; and his discourse upon *Satire*, quoted in these commentaries, *Madam Dacier's* preface to her version of *Homer*, and *Mr. Pope's* preface to his translation of the same Poet, it will be time enough to consider, with more prolixity, the weight of his arguments; for 'till then, *Homer* and *Virgil* will remain the standard of excellence in the *Epopœia*, as they are fixt with the highest justice by the most noble author of the *Essay on Poetry*.

Thus I have pass'd thro' those considerations which I had to offer upon the *Essay on Poetry*, a work as excellent and useful in its kind, as admirable in its performance; the importance of its precepts is not more visible in every part of it, than the elegance of its delivery. This judicious and accomplish'd poem seems to me to do with the learned in *Aristotle* and *Horace*, as the fine and finishing touches of a great painter or sculptor with a picture or statue, giving a force, vivacity, and grace to the piece; this I am sure my author will do to his judicious reader; and that I might contribute to the same end, I have endeavour'd, as much as I cou'd, to deliver what I have said upon him with the same freedom, easiness, and genteel manner which he inspir'd, avoiding, as much as possibly I cou'd, that vain and stiff ostentation of learning which *commentators* do too generally affect. I could with the greatest ease in the world, at least with much less pains and trouble than I have been at, have stuff'd these *commentaries* with quotations both of *Greek* and *Latin*, from the several learned critics who have
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written upon these subjects; but I have taken care to bring no more than what I could not possibly avoid; for the dilucidation or confirmation of some particular points which absolutely requir'd them.

If in the whole I have fallen short of the excellence of my illustrious author, I shall make no difficulty of owning the cause, and that is, that I fall short of the greatness of his genius, which, with the disadvantage of a very bad health, and circumstances not so easy as I could wish, have, in great measure, disappointed my desires in the performance. However, I have this satisfaction, that I have in this manner endeavour'd to shew my particular value for the *Essay on Poetry*; and tho' others, who may succeed me, may, perhaps, excel me in what they shall say upon this head, yet they will not be capable of avoiding this reflection, that it is no difficult matter to add to what is already invented.

Facile est inventis addere.

But after all that my author and myself have said, this melancholy consideration occurs, viz. that we have both been washing the *Ethiop*, labouring in vain to make a sooty complexion fair and white; which no outward applications can remove, since 'tis fix'd by those little globules between the *cutis* and *cuticula*, which determin the complexion in all men, if we may believe the *anatomists*. There is no contending with nature; and, indeed, it is a very unequal combat to contend with custom and receiv'd notions, which are call'd a second nature, and which,
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in the generality of mankind, are as hard to be remov'd as the principles of nature itself. When errors of any kind have got possession of men, they are generally more tenacious of them, than even of those truths which they have receiv'd. The cause of this seems to me to be, that reason is necessary to preserve and recover truth; whereas that noble faculty of the soul, that divine guide of the mind, is too weak in most men to influence their opinions or actions: precepts are not obey'd without a severe consideration; it is labouring up hill all the way, and which cannot be done, but by those that are peculiarly favour'd by heaven with a strong and noble genius; but men roll down the hill to error with abundance of ease; that lazy supinity, which is in the operations of the mind of most men, gives them a *strange alacrity in sinking*: What *Virgil* says of the descent into hell, and the return thence, holds perfectly true about error and truth:

————— *Facilis descensus Avernus*;
 (*Noctes atque dies patet atri janua Ditis*)
Sed revocare gradum, superasque evadere ad arces;
Hoc opus, hic labor est: Pauci, quos aequus amavit
Jupiter, aut ardens evexit ad aethera virtus;
Dius geniti, potuere.—————

To error the descent is easy, the way is always open; but to return to truth is of the greatest difficulty, which few have obtain'd but those sons of the gods, assisted either by equal *Jove*, or rais'd up to it by their own proper virtue. If our recovery from particular errors be so hard, as certainly experience

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convinces it is, to escape from those errors which are national is much more laborious, and arduous, and scarce to be obtain'd but by the favour'd sons of the gods, and men of uncommon virtue and understanding. Number and custom stamp such an authority upon them, that whoever presumes to oppose them, is sure to have the odious reflection cast upon him, as the invader of receiv'd truths, or at least of one who fondly affects a singularity in opinion not to be justify'd. And this is the case before us, and always has been, where particular men, tho' masters of the nicest taste and judgment, have attempted singly to combat with the ignorance, follies, or vices of an age or nation; for national or general errors, whether in manners or opinion, either religious or scientific, have seldom or never been reform'd, but by some happy conjuncture of public affairs, or the influence of some great man or men. In religion, our *Wickliff*, *John Husse*, and *Hierome of Prague*, got little, by the doctrines they advanc'd against the errors of popery, but their own destruction; whereas *Luther*, by the concurrent circumstances of things, brought about the reformation all at once. Thus the power of ignorance, which had prevail'd so many centuries, was but weakly attack'd by *Petrarch*, *Boccace*, and some others, 'till *Cesmo* and *Lorenzo di Medici*, with the power of *Florence*, restor'd, in great measure, the politer arts of the ancients in *Italy*, as that great statesman *Cardinal Richelieu* did in *France*: And at as low an ebb as these fine arts are in *England*, I am fully persuaded that the influence of any great man in power may do the same among us; but 'till such a great man shall

shall arise, I am afraid that the highest reason of particular writers will make but a very few converts; custom and number being so strongly set against 'em. If the clear dictates of reason, and the harmonious charms of art, could please us on the one side, or the most gross absurdities, ignorance, and confusion displease us on the other; nay, were our minds but so far disengaged as to listen with a just regard to what has been or may be said in the behalf of art, the task would not be so difficult as it is; but we have arm'd our minds with some maxims as foolish as false, that forbid a just enquiry into these things. One of the most pernicious of these is, that perfection in poetry (for example) is not to be distinguish'd by certain rules, but depends entirely upon fancy; for there are a sort of men who would have poetry, like beauty, the creature of fancy only, and that of every particular man's fancy, which destroys all manner of certainty of what is beauty, and what is not, as one of their witty men has it:

*I wou'd a poet, like a mistress, try,
Not by her hair, her hand, her nose, or eye;
But by some nameless power, to give me joy.*

But as there is a certain standard of beauty, and such a one of which there is no dispute among the knowing in *painting* and *statuary*, so likewise there is in poetry a certain perfection which is not subject to the caprice of unguided fancy, but decided by judgment, that is, by the rules of art. The first is plain from the pictures of *Apelles*, *Zeuxis*, and others; and the sta-

tues of *Phidias*, *Polycletes*, *Leucippus*, and others, who collected the beauties of several real women to form one perfect beauty; one of which is call'd the rule, and has in all ages been acknowledg'd to be so. It has been an establish'd maxim among the great painters in all ages, that in their draughts of beauty they are not to imitate any particular product of nature, how agreeable so ever it may seem; because nature has never given sovereign perfection of beauty to any particular, but that they must have before their eyes that idea of beauty which is entirely perfect; whereas if there were no certain knowledge of what this beauty was, it could never be drawn by the painter, or committed to marble by the sculptor, both which have been so frequently done by the *Grecians* and *Italians*; nay, the essentials of beauty have not been only known to the great painters, but even those of deformity and ugliness; which shews, that they go upon certain principles of judgment. Thus *Guido Reni*, sending to Rome his *Sr. Michael*, which he had painted for the Church of the *Capuchins*, at the same time wrote to *Monsignor Massano*, who was *maestro di casa* (or steward of the house) to pope *Urban* the eighth, in this manner:

I wish I had had the wings of an Angel to have ascended into Paradise, and there to have beheld the forms of those beatified spirits, from which I might have copied my Archangel; but not being able to mount so high, it was in vain for me to search his resemblance here below; so that I was forc'd to make an introspection into my own mind, and into that idea of beauty which I had form'd in my

own imagination. I have likewise created there the contrary idea of deformity and ugliness; but I leave the consideration of it till I paint the Devil; and in the mean time shun the very thought of it as much as possibly I can, and am endeavouring to blot it wholly out of my remembrance.

If all this be so evident in painting and sculpture (and I think, from what has been said, it cannot be disputed) it is much more so in poetry, whose rules or laws we have in *Aristotle*, *Horace*, and the *Essay* that has been under our consideration; so that by whatever nameless power these witty gentlemen would try either an author, or a mistress, if not by the certain rules of excellence, they may make choice of a meer scribbler for an author, and a meer dowdy for their mistress.

There is another great enemy to the prevailing of art and a fine taste in this nation, and that is, a strange fondness we have for the *ridicule*, or any thing that will make us laugh. If what *Cicero* says be true, that to move laughter is the meanest fruit of wit, certainly a general propension to laughter is no great argument of our wit or understanding. It has not only banish'd all serious enquiries, and all that is valuable in solid learning and good sense, but shuts up all the avenues to the mind against the return of the precepts of art and reason, by filling it with such merry trifling amusements, as have of late years met with the greatest applause, and given the highest authority to the writers of them. These laughers are the greatest and most incorrigible enemies of all the
fine

fine arts. Plain ignorance may oftentimes receive instruction, whereas the merry *coxcomb* is so far from improving, or even hearing of it, that he makes it only the subject of his thoughtless jest and insipid raillery, under which he shelters his own scandalous ignorance, and endeavours to make others as guilty of it as himself.

There is yet another enemy to the fine arts, and that a more dangerous one than either of the former; more dangerous, because it seems to cut off all hopes, all resource from the *fine arts* and *sciences*, and that is, the propension to *avarice*, which is now spread so wide through all states and degrees both political and religious.

Avarice contracts all the larger views of the soul, in which it participates of the nature of the celestial beings, crowding all the operations of the mind into a blind and narrow pursuit of a sordid and foolish gain, by which the human soul falls below the excellence of the brute creation; for a man who has not beneficence, let his power and station be never so great, is in reality less valuable than a *dog*; for a *dog* may be, and often is, a beneficial and useful animal; but *avarice* utterly destroys beneficence, and renders its votaries useless even to themselves, and much more, by consequence, to the rest of mankind, destroying all those social virtues by which communities have always been render'd glorious and safe, every one of which has a share in beneficence. The avaricious man is indeed a sort of a *Cain*, every man's hand is against him, and he against every man; but Poetry teaching always a doctrine destructive of avarice,

rice, it cannot be thought that it can ever obtain its favour and protection; but when this vice becomes national, or at least very general in a nation, it is a certain sign that all things great and good have left it, and a fatal prognostick of the hastening ruine of the country so infected; for I do not remember any people that ever recover'd of this vice.

These, with many more, are the certain marks of a barbarism inconsistent with the name of a polite nation, and confirm my fear, that, as I have said, I have been washing the *Ethiop*. I confess, I say, that I'm afraid all my endeavours this way, during so great a declension of a tolerable taste, and the great power of ignorance in this age, will prove but a sort of *labour in vain*; yet since, perhaps, hereafter there may a more knowing people arise, I would leave this memorial to them, that they might see, that even in these abandon'd times there were some, very few, who lov'd and were acquainted with *art*. A *Grecian* philosopher, being cast away upon an unknown coast, comforted his friends that were shipwreck'd with him, that they were thrown upon a civiliz'd country, because he found drawn upon the sand a problem of *Euclid*; so when other people shall appear who have a taste, by this discourse they will find, that *art* was not wholly unknown to this age.



vice, it cannot be thought that it can ever obtain its former and perfection; but when this vice becomes national, or at least very general in a nation, it is a corruption that all things great and good have lost it, and a fatal prognosis of the hastening ruin of the country is indicated; for I do not remember any people that ever recovered of this vice.

There, with many more, are the certain marks of a degradation inconsistent with the name of a nation; and, as I have said, that as I have said, I have been saying the same. I console myself that I am a friend to all my countrymen, and the great power of education of a noble race, and the great power of ignorance in this age, will prove but a sort of loss in vain; yet since, perhaps, I shall never have a more knowing people than I would have this memorial to them, that they might see, that even in their abandoned state, there were some very few who loved and were acquainted with the God of philosophers, and who were upon an unknown coast, comforted his friends that were shipwrecked with him, that they were thrown upon a civilized country, because he found drawn upon the land a problem of human, to which other people shall appear who have a part, by this account they will find that he was not wholly unknown to this age.



valle depono elosw zambos nini vq. 11



NOTES

UPON THE

Earl of Roscommon's Essay,

ON

Translated Verse.

O his Grace's excellent poem, I think
 it will not be improper to subjoin my
Lord Roscommon's Essay on translated
verse; for tho' the title seems to re-
 gard only translation, yet since it contains many
 precepts which plainly relate to composition, I
 think that the printing of it here will contribute
 to the perfection of my design.

U

Happy

Happy that author, whose correct essay
 Runs so well our old *Horatian* way;
 And happy you, who, by propitious fate,
 On great *Apollo's* sacred standard wait;
 And with strict discipline instructed right,
 Have learn'd to use your arms before you fight.

This part of his Lordship's introduction, is not only a just praise on the essay on poetry, but a recommendation of rules in general, and of those in particular.

Mr. Waller, whose genius has not been yet disputed, that I know of, in his verses before my Lord's translation of *Horace's* art of poetry tells us.

*Britain whose genius is in verse express'd
 Bold and sublime, but negligently dress'd.*

Thro' that whole copy he recommends the rules to our authors study and observation, which will show, that the art of criticism was not so despicable in the eye of Mr. Waller, as in that of some more modern writers, since he knew that it was the art of proportion'd wonders, as he calls them.

*He that proportion'd wonders can disclose,
 As once his fancy and his judgment shows.*

Fancy.

Fancy and judgment must join in every poet, as courage and conduct in every general; for where either is wanting, the other is useless, or of little value. Fancy is what we generally call *nature*, or a *genius*; judgment is what we mean by *art*; the union of which two, in our Man, makes a compleat poet.

But since the *Press*, the *Pulpit*, and the *Stage*,
Conspire to censure and expose our age;
Provok'd too far, we resolutely must,
To the few virtues that we have, be just;
For who have long'd, or who have labour'd

To search the treasure of the *Roman* store,
Or dig in *Grecian* mines for purer ore.

This poem, if I am not misinformed, was written soon after the declaration of the *Papish* plot, and the *press* was perpetually teeming with political pamphlets, as it does at this time, and to which Mr. Dryden in a prologue of his refers.

*The pamphleteers their venom daily spit,
They live by treason, and we starve by wit.*

The *pulpit* is seldom behind-hand in these affairs, and the fashions then reach'd ev'n the *stage*. His Lordship seems to have thought of the beginning of the first *say* of *Juvénal*.

Semper ego audire censeo, nunquam ripendam?

And the impertinencies of the *press*, *pulpit* and *stage*, provok'd him to do justice to our *few virtues*, which he justly places in our *translations of poetry*; in which I think without partiality, we may allow the *English* the first place; and this the following lines make out yet more plainly.

The noblest fruits, transplanted in our isle,
With early hopes and fragrant blossoms simile.
Familiar *Ovid* tender thoughts inspires,
And nature seconds all his soft desires.

I cannot pass the lines that mention *Ovid* with that justice, without taking notice of what Mr. *Dryden* has said to the prejudice of this charming Author; for he has, without any proof or tolerable reason, deny'd him nature and fineness in his sentiments of love, as if he cou'd not have given the fourth book of *Virgil* its due, without debasing *Ovid* to the level of *Cowley*, or some worse modern composer of love songs and amorous madrigals. But I dare set my Lord's opinion of him in verse, against what Mr. *Dryden* has urg'd in prose, and then *Ovid* will retain all that delicacy, softness and nature, which all the world have allowed him, except Mr. *Dryden*.

But by the following quotations, we shall find that Mr. *Dryden* himself confirms my Lord *Roscommon's* opinion of this poet. In his *Preface* to the *translations of Ovid's epistles* we may find these words, *This may be said in behalf of Ovid, that no man has ever treated the passion of love with so much delicacy of thought and of expression,*

or search'd into the nature of it more philosophically than he.

And a little after,

If the imitation of nature be the business of a poet, I know no author who can justly be compar'd with ours, especially in the description of the passions. And to prove this, I shall need no other judges than the generality of his readers; for all passions being in-born with us, we are almost equally judges when we are concern'd in the representation of them: Now I will appeal to any man who has read this poet, whether he finds not the natural emotion of the same passion in himself, which the poet describes in his feign'd persons? His thoughts, which are the pictures and results of those passions, are generally such as naturally arise from those disorderly motions of our spirits.

Theocritus does now to us belong,
And *Albion's* rocks repeat his *Rural Song*.
Who has not heard how *Italy* was blest,
Above the *Medes*, above the wealthy *East*?
Or *Gallus* song, so tender and so true,
As ev'n *Lycoris* might with pity view.
When mourning nymphs attend their *Daph-*
nus herse,
Who does not weep that reads the moving
(verse?)

These, and the following triplet, pay an honourable compliment to our *translations* out of *Virgil*, *Ovid*, and *Theocritus*; which his Lordship would

And *Europe* must acknowledge that she gains,
Both by their good example and their pains.

My Lord generously allows the *French* nation their due, in praising their *translators* and their writings; for it is certain, nothing contributes more to the spreading of knowledge or arts and sciences, than to have them read in the vernacular or mother tongue. And if we must not ascribe the care which the *French* king express'd for the encouraging of all manner of arts and sciences, to his natural generosity and love of them; yet we must grant that he was so wise and so good a politician, as to know that it was extremely conducive to his glory and interest: And I could wish, that the statesmen of our nation (who have a good opinion enough of their own capacity) would convince the world, that they are politicians sufficient to know that arts and sciences are worthy their chief care; or satisfy us that the founder of the *Roman* monarchy *Mecenas*, and the raiser of the *French* power to that terrible height we have in our age seen it, were not so great statesmen as themselves. But to proceed,

From hence our gen'rous emulation came;
We undertook, and we perform'd the same:
But now, we shew the world a nobler way,
And in translated verse do more than they.

The excellence indeed of the *French* translators has been in their versions of prosaic authors;

T H E

Sixth O D E

(O F T H E

Third Book of *Horace*.*Of the Corruption of the Times.*

HOSE ills your ancestors have done,
Romans, are now become your own;
And they will cost you dear,
Unless you soon repair

The falling temples, which the Gods provoke,
And statues fally'd yet with sacrilegious smoke.

Propitious heav'n, that rais'd your fathers high

For humble, grateful piety,

(As it rewarded their respect)

Hath sharply punish'd your neglect.

All empires on the Gods depend,

Begun by their command, at their command they end.

Let Crassus ghost and Labienus tell,

How twice, by Jove's revenge, our legions fell,

And with insulting pride

Shining in Roman spoils the Parthian victors ride.

The

The Scythian and Egyptian scums
 Had almost ruin'd Rôme,
 While our seditions took their part,
 Fill'd each Egyptian sail, and wing'd each Scythian

First those flagitious times (darr.
 (Pregnant with unknown crimes)
 Conspire to violate the nuptial bed,
 From which polluted head
 Infectious streams of crowding sins began,
 And thro' the spurious breed and guilty nation ran.

Behold a ripe and melting maid
 Bound prentice to the wanton trade,
 Ionian artists at a mighty price,
 Instruct her in the mysteries of vice;
 What nets to spread, where subtle baits to lay,
 And with an early hand they form the temper'd
 (clay.

Marry'd, their lessons she improves
 By practice of adult'rous loves,
 And scorns the common mean design,
 To take advantage of her husband's wine;
 Or snatch, in some dark place,
 A hasty illegitimate embrace.
 No! the brib'd husband knows of all,
 And bids her rise when lovers call:
 Hither a merchant from the Streights,
 Grown wealthy by forbidden freights;
 Or city Cannibal, repairs,
 Who feeds upon the flesh of heirs;

*Convenient brutes, whose tributary flame,
Pays the full price of lust, and gilds the slighted shame;*

*'Twas not the spawn of such as these,
That dy'd with Punick blood the conquer'd seas,
And quash'd the stern Æacides;
Made the proud Asian monarch feel
How weak his gold was against Europe's steel;
Forc'd ev'n dire Hannibal to yield;
And won the long-disputed world at Zama's fatal field.*

*But soldiers of a rustick mould,
Rough, hardy, season'd, manly, bold,
Either they dug the stubborn ground,
Or thro' hewn woods their weighty strokes did sound;
And after the declining sun
Had chang'd the shadows, and their task was done,
Home with their weary team they took their way,
And drown'd in friendly bowls the labour of the day.*

*Time sensibly all things impairs,
Our fathers have been worse than theirs,
And we than ours, next age will see
A race more profligate than we
(With all the pains we take) have skill enough to be.*

*Vain are our neighbours hopes, and vain their
(cares,
The fault is more their languages than theirs,
'Tis courtly, florid, and abounds in words
Of softer sound, than ours perhaps affords;
But who did ever in French authors see
The comprehensive English energy?*

As

will often very much assist us in that particular.

But I am apt to believe, that his Lordship means the use of the *judgment* in the choice of an author agreeable to the translator's *genius*, as he afterwards expresses it; or to the finding out of the author's sense, in which he himself was extremely laborious.

But that still is confining judgment to words only, a work so very inconsiderable in regard of its other offices, that it merits not the name of *judgment* in so compleat a manner. In short it must be allow'd, that *good translation* is no easy but a very useful art.

The soil intended for *Pænan* seeds,
Must be well purg'd from rank pedantick
(weeds.

Apollo starts, and all *Parnassius* shakes,
At the rude rumbling *Baralipton* makes.

For none have been, with admiration, read,
But who (besides their learning) were well-
(bred.

This is a rule very just, and as modern as the fault it is made against. A great deal of pedantry has sprung from our general manner of education, which is much different from that of the antients; for while youth is taught by formal pedants, 'tis much if the folly and rust should not stick to the pupils. Pedantry is not only an affectation of exotic words in common
dis-

discourse, and writing of perpetual scraps of *Latin* and *Greek*, and the like; but a short affected form and position of words, which is very common in the works of our dramatick poets, and indeed the greatest part of them till within these forty years: In short, all ostentation of learning in terms of art, and words unusual in common life and polite authors, is pedantry and contrary to good breeding. The reason of this is plain; for pedantick words destroy the harmony and clearness of verse, as we may see in many of the old commendatory verses, before some of our most antient poets.

It is indeed very plain, that the rust is never or very seldom worn off, till a town conversation has refin'd that of the university.

The first great work (a task perform'd by few)

Is that your self may to your self be true:

No mask, no tricks, no favour, no reserve;

Dissect your mind, examine ev'ry nerve.

Whoever vainly on his strength depends,

Begins like *Virgil*, but like *Mævi*us ends.

This is his Lordships first rule, and which holds as well in composition as translation, and these with the following twelve lines are a comment on this of *Horace*.

*Let poets match their subject to their strength,
And often try what weight they can support,
And what their shoulders are too weak to bear.*

And

And indeed it is a very great work to know one's self so far, as to confine one's pen to the talent and genius nature has bestow'd: And all that is done out of that, is labour and pains without any fruit. On the contrary, as *Horace* observes in the following words,

*After a serious and judicious choice,
Method and eloquence will never fail.*

This is sufficient to show the importance of this first precept, which my Lord still pushes on in this manner.

That wretch (in spite of his forgotten
(rhimes)

Condemn'd to live to all succeeding times,
With pompous *nonsense* and a bellowing sound,
Sung lofty *Ilium* tumbling to the ground;
And (if my muse can thro' past ages see)
That noisey, nauseous, gaping fool was he,
Exploded, when, with universal scorn,
The *mountains* labour'd, and a *mouse* was
(born.

It is no great matter whether this *Mævius* were the man reflected on by *Horace* or not; but it is certain he must be a very wretched scoundrel, that could provoke the good nature and sweet temper of *Virgil*.

*Qui Bavius non odit amet tua carmina Mævi.
Who hates not Bavius, may he love thy verse.*

And he is an example, sufficient to deter any considering man from attempting out of his depth, in such dangerous seas, where he may lose much, but get little. But my Lord goes on with improving this law or advice of *Horace*.

*Learn, learn, CROTONA's brawny wrestler cries,
Audacious mortals, and be timely wise;
'Tis I that call, remember Milo's end,
Wedg'd in that timber which he strove to rend.*

Since perhaps many of my readers may not know the story here mention'd, I shall give it them in short. This *Milo* of *Crotona* was a very large strong fellow, who at the *Olympic* games would carry an ox the space of a furlong without resting; and kill a bull with his bare fist at one blow, and make but a meal of it when he had done. But this mighty man attempting to split an oak in a forest, had his arms seiz'd in the cleft, whence he could not disengage himself, and so was destroy'd by wild beasts; his story remaining still a lesson against attempting more than we can perform, what follows is still an explanation of this one precept, as

*Each poet with a different talent writes;
One PRAISES, one INSTRUCTS, another BITES:*

HORACE *did ne'er aspire to EPICK BAYS,*
Nor lofty MARO stoop'd to Lyric lays.

My Lord seems, in my opinion, to be out in his instances here, for tho' *Horace* did ne'er aspire to *epic Bays*, yet *Virgil* stoop'd lower than the *Lyric lays*; when he sang the shepherds and their flock. The Gods and heroes are sung in *Lyric lays*; but nothing but beasts, and men a degree above them, in his *Bucolics*. However this gives the student this knowledge, that those poets who have excell'd and convey'd their names to posterity, knew their talents and kept to them, and therefore his Lordship presses very well.

Examine how your *humour* is inclin'd,
 And which the ruling passion of your mind;
 Then, seek a poet who your way do's bend,
 And chuse an *author* as you chuse a friend.

This is admirable advice to a translator of verse, for hence will pleasure attend his undertaking; and his familiarity will be so great, that he must transfuse the soul of the author into his own language; for as my Lord proceeds

United by this sympathetick bond
You grew familiar, intimate and fond,
Your thoughts, your words, your stiles, your souls
No longer his interpreter, but he. (agree,

Which is the highest perfection translation can arrive at, and I am afraid hitherto it has been
 too

too far short of it. I mean, in our translations from the antients, in those from the moderns we have often excell'd them. My Lord proceeds now to precepts for the first modelling the virgin muse.

With how much ease is a young muse betray'd,
How nice the reputation of the maid,
Your early kind paternal care appears,
By chaste Instruction of her tender years.

To put this out of metaphor and allegory, which may not perhaps carry so clear an idea, as may be necessary for many readers. His Lordship makes a parallel case betwixt a virgin and a muse, and not amiss, for the reputation of a poet oftentimes depends on the success of his first appearance, and I have known the influence of that so strong, that it has oppress'd his best performances afterwards. It is very necessary therefore in a young writer, to fix his judgment and bring his early muse to a regularity, and not to permit her to ramble thro' all the devious paths of fancy; for when she has got this head of you, she is hard to be reduced to a more orderly course.

The first impression in her infant breast
Will be the deepest, and should be the best.
Let not austerity breed servile fear,
No wanton sound offend her *virgin ear*,

Secure from foolish pride's affected state,
And specious flattery's more pernicious bait:
Habitual innocence adorns her thoughts,
But your neglect must answer for her faults.

These verses are only a pursuit of the same thought, which is to inculcate, that you should have a care of the first impressions on your notions of poetry, which will lead you astray, and often into obstinacy in your errors; for first principles are with great difficulty remov'd. The muse by these lines must not be in too much awe, nor too much fondled, but nicely conducted by habitual innocence between pride and flattery. His Lordship's next rule is something less obscure, and less involv'd in allegory.

Inmodest words admit of no defence,
For want of decency is want of sense;
What moderate fop would rake the park or
(stews,
Who among troops of faultless Nymphs may
(chuse.

It is indeed a scandal to poetry, to see so many lewdnesses adorn'd with the ornaments of verse; nor can I think that any of the beauties of diction, which are pretended to be found in *Petronius Arbitr*, poise enough for the abandon'd obscenities, which makes it seem to be writ in the stews, and as nauseous as the distempers of those places. Nay, the very *Latin*

of *Petronius* is mostly and perpetually mingl'd either with *Greek* words, or hellenisms. It might be the court language in his time, but it is as far from the chaste purity of *Cicero's*, as the subject he has chosen is from any of the works of that admirable orator. The choosing of such an one, when there are so many charming nymphs to be found, and at your command, discovers a downward bent, and the corruptions of the poets inclinations.

Variety of such is to be found,
Take then a subject proper to expound;
But moral, great, and worth a poet's voice,
For men of sense despise a trivial choice.

That is, there are variety of innocent subjects to be met with in the antient authors, or in the modern; and therefore a poet who cannot but be master in his choice, must by it discover his inclinations, and if those be trivial, that must be so of course.

And such applause it must expect to meet,
As wou'd some painter, busy in a street
To copy *bulls* and *bears*, and ev'ry sign
That calls the staring fots to nasty wine.

Having thus endeavour'd to inculcate the importance of a nicety in your choice, my Lord proceeds to tell you, that the goodness of your choice of a subject is not sufficient, there are other things to be regarded as

Yet 'tis not all to have a subject good,
 It must delight us when 'tis understood,
 He that brings fulsome objects to my view,
 (As many *old* have done, and many *new*)
 With *nauseous images*, my fancy fills,
 And all goes down like *oxymel* of *squills*.

The subject therefore must be something that
 can afford pleasure, one of the two great aims
 of poetry. And as *Horace* says,

*Non satis est pulchra esse poemata, dulcia sunto,
 Et quocunque valunt animum auditoris agunto.*

Tho' my Lord has not gone so far as this in
 this precept, it is plainly taken from it. But let
 us see what his Lordship means by these images
 he condemns, which he does not come to till he
 has propos'd a master to you to follow, or ra-
 ther a poem for you to translate, which since
 his time has seen *English*.

Instruct the listning world how *Maro* sings
 Of useful subjects, and of lofty things :
 These will such true, such bright ideas raise,
 As merit *gratitude*, as well as praise:
 But foul descriptions are offensive still,
 Either for being like, or being ill.

Thus

Thus his Lordship recommends *Virgil* to our translator, and from him to teach us useful subjects and *lofty things*. This work is since finished by *Mr. Dryden*, and I think if we allow for the time he did it in, it is better done than any poet in any other language has perform'd, and I am apt to believe better than any one will do in our own. By foul descriptions, I find here his Lordship means the descriptions of the sacrifices of the *Ilias*, &c. but certainly no Man that reads an author of so sacred antiquity as *Homer*, wou'd forget any thing for the advantage of his works, especially when it is but to do him justice. For the *Heroes* of old were not so squeamish to be touch'd with qualms at a description of *holy garbade*, since religious incense render'd all those things so sacred and sweet, as not to suffer them to be disgustful. But my Lord goes on with equal Injustice.

*For who without a qualm has ever look'd,
On holy garbade, tho' by HOMER cook't,
Whose railing HEROES, and whose wounded GODS,
Make some suspect he snores as well as nods.*

I shall only here say, that if his Lordship had consider'd the religion, manners, customs, opinions, and the like, of the antients, he would have spar'd this reflection; and tho' the *holy garbade* might nauseate a heroe in *French* romance, who do nothing but love and fight, and never eat; yet those in *Homer* were eating and drink-

ing, as well as fighting heroes. But for the railing, I am afraid his Lordship measures their; by our gothick and degenerate customs: duels, and the like pretences of courage were not known; nothing but fighting the enemies of your country was then the test of valour.

But I offend——*Virgil* begins to frown,
And *Horace* looks with indignation down:
My blushing muse with conscious fear retires,
And whom they like implicitly admires.

My Lord in this would seem to make amends for what he gave, as his opinion, of *Homer*, by implicitly submitting to *Horace* and *Virgil*, who indeed may be allow'd to be better acquainted with the graces and beauties of a living language, and those things which the religion and manners of their age made a juster comment on; than this distance of time, and many changes of manners, religion and opinion will suffer us to do,

On sure foundations let your fabrick rise,
And with inviting majesty surprize;
Not by affected *Meretricious* arts,
But strict harmonious symmetry of parts;
Which thro' the whole insensibly must pass,
With vital heat to animate the mass,

These

These lines relate not at all to translation, but to the formation of an original poem, in the forming of which he advises the poet to consult order and harmony, and make all the parts agreeable to each other, and form one compleat whole: But as this seems a hint taken from the *Essay on Poetry*, so we may there find what this harmonious symmetry is, in which his Lordship leaves us a little in the dark, the two last lines seem near a kin to these.

*A spirit that inspires the work throughout,
As that of nature moves the world about.*

And that which confirms this conjecture is, that my Lord goes on describing this vital heat as the *Essay on Poetry* does.

*A pure, an active, an auspicious flame,
And bright as heaven, from whence the blessing came.*

The *Essay on Poetry* has it thus,

*A heat that glows in every line that's writ,
'Tis something of divine and more than WIT;
It self unseen, yet all things by it shown,
Describing all men, yet describ'd by none, &c.*

But to go on with my Lord Roscommon.

*But few, oh, few, souls, preordain'd by fate,
The race of Gods, have reach'd that enviy'd height.
No REBEL-TITANS sacriligious crime,
By heaping hills on hills, can thither climb.*

His

His Lordship here very justly informs us, that a poet must have true warmth like that of nature, undisturb'd and in its usual course, not that out-ragious fire of a fever or distemper'd nature, as he afterwards has it.

*Beware what spirit rages in your breast,
For ten inspir'd, ten thousand are possess'd.*

And few ages of poetry but have produc'd a *Statius*, with big noisey words, imitating awkwardly that sublime which they cannot attain, but as different from it as the mimic thunder of *Salmoneus*, from that of *Jupiter*.

*The grizly FERRY-MAN of hell deny'd
Æneas entrance, till he knew his guide :
How justly then will impious mortals fall,
Whose pride would soar to heav'n without a call ?*

I shou'd in my weak opinion instead of *Charon*, have thought of *Salmoneus*, whom *Jupiter* struck with a thunderbolt, for daring to mimic his thunder.

Yet both wou'd be just enough, for my Lord implies, that if *Charon* wou'd not admit a pious hero into the boat without the divine authority of the golden bough and *Sybil*, much less wou'd they escape, who by vanity and pride, wou'd aspire to the heavenly flame without inspiration.

Pride

*Pride (of all others the most dangerous fau't)
 Proceeds from want of sense, or want of THOUGHT.
 The men, who labour and digest things most,
 Will be much apter to despond, than boast :
 For if your author be profoundly good,
 'Twill cost you dear before he's understood.*

My Lord is here infinitely in the right; for experience shows us, that the most ignorant are always the most assur'd, and that merit is always modest. Besides this pride in an author, makes him neglect the labour and care, which is necessary to make a compleat poem or translation.

My Lord here returns to translation, and is of a contrary opinion to Mr. Cowley, who tells his friend that sends him word, that he does not know whether *Persius* be a good poet or not, because he did not understand him, that he is not a good poet for that very reason. Yet there is medium enough betwixt both to leave each in some measure in the right, for it will require some application to be perfectly master of *Homer*, *Virgil*, or *Horace*; and yet that difficulty does not proceed from any defect of those great poets, but of the distance of time, and the deaths of those languages, the alteration of manners, customs, &c. but he goes on,

How many ages since has *Virgil* writ ?

How few are they who understand him yet ?

Approach

Approach his altars with religious fear,
 No petty deity inhabits there ;
 Heav'n shakes not more at *Joves imperial nod*,
 Than poets shou'd before their *Mantuan God*.

These lines are but an enlargement on what he said before, as what follow are only an offering to *Virgil* himself, after he had made him a God.

*Hail mighty MARO ! may that sacred name,
 Kindle my breast with thy celestial flame,
 Sublime ideas, and apt words infuse,
 The muse instruct my voice, and thou inspire my muse.*

This praise of *Virgil* is very just ; but it were to be wish'd that his Lordship had been as well acquainted with *Homer* as he was with *Virgil*, then he would not have been wholly silent upon that sovereign father, not only of *Virgil* himself, but of all the poets.

What I have instanc'd only in the best,
 Is in proportion true of all the rest,
 Take pains the genuine meaning to explore,
 There sweat, there strain, tug the laborious
 (oar,
 Search every *comment*, that your care can find,
 Some here, some there, may hit the poet's mind.

Yet

Yet be not blindly guided by the throng,
The multitude is always in the wrong.

The sum of these lines is, that the translator must take the utmost care to find out the genuine meaning of his author, of which he makes him in some measure judge, by examining the commentators, and as he says in the following verses, by comparing the author with himself.

When things appear unnatural and hard,
Consult your author with himself compar'd :
Who knows what blessing *Phœbus* may bestow,
And future ages to your labour owe ?

I think there cannot be much said to these Lines, or to the following.

Such secrets are not easily found out,
But once discover'd, leave no room for doubt.
Truth stamps conviction in your ravish'd
(breast,

And *peace* and *joy*, attend the glorious guest.
Yet if one shadow of a scruple stay,
Sure the most beaten is the safest way.

All that his Lordship intends by these good verses is, that by a diligent inquiry after the true sense of your author, by consulting commentators, comparing him with himself, and studying,

dying him throughly, it may happen that you may make some discovery that may be valuable, and that if this discovery be of value, that is well grounded and true, it will leave no doubt, but if the least of that remains, you ought to follow the general opinion.

Truth still is one; truth is divinely bright,
No cloudy doubts obscure her native light:
While in your thoughts you find the least
(debate,
You may *confound*, but never can *translate*:

These lines are only a beautiful and explanatory comment on those which go before, and nothing is more certain than what the two last lines assert, which his Lordship farther confirms in the following verses.

Your stile will this thro' all disguises show,
For none explain more clearly than they know:
He only proves, he understands a text,
Whose exposition leaves it unperplex'd.

These are indeed a comment on what went before, these that follow begin a new head, and instance a fault which was very common among our old translators.

*They who too faithfully on names insist,
Rather create, then dissipate the mist,*

And

*And grow unjust by being over nice,
For superstitious virtue turns to vice.)*

To make this plain by an instance; the second Book of *Virgil's Æneis*, was translated by Sir John Denham, Ogleby, and Dryden: thus Ogleby translates these verses.

----- Quis talia fando.

*Myrmidonum, Dolopumve, aut duri Miles ULYSSEI,
Temperet a Lacrymis?*

*Which to recount what Myrmidon forbears,
DOLOPE, or stern ULYSSES soldier, tears?*

Thus Sir John Denham;

*Not the most cruel of our conqu'ring foes,
So unconcern'dly can relate our woes,
As not to lend a tear.-----*

And thus Mr. Dryden:

*Not even the hardest of our foes could hear,
Nor stern ULYSSES tell, without a tear.*

There do not want many words to show the difference betwixt Ogleby and the other two; the two latter have given us the sense of the author justly express'd; the former by keeping to the words of the original, has lost both the sense and harmony of his author, and may serve as an instruction to other translators to avoid the same fault.

Let

Let *Crassus's* Ghost, and *Labienus* tell
 How twice in *Parthian* plains their legions
 (fell
 Since *Rome* hath been so jealous of her fame,
 Few know *Pacorus* or *Monefes* name.

His Lordship's meaning will best appear by the very *Ode*, quoted in the margin of his poem, viz. *Horace* 6th *Ode*, Book the 3d, to which I refer the reader; being translated by himself with so admirable an address, that I doubt whether it be not equal to the original; but this I may say, that it is the best translation of *Horace* that we have in the *English* tongue, so that we may apply his Lordship's words to himself, that he is

No longer his interpreter, but he.

But I have already given you the *Ode* at length; therefore let us proceed.

Words in one language elegantly us'd,
 Will hardly in another be excus'd;
 And some that *Rome* admir'd in *Cæsar's* time,
 May neither suit our genius, nor our clime.
 The *genuine sense*, intelligibly told,
 Shows a *translator* both *discreet* and *bold*.

What

What has been said before, relates to proper names, as in the instance before given; but this reaches farther, and I think Mr. *Dryden* himself, has sinn'd against this rule in his version of *Ovid*.

Nor cou'd they form, O *Cyllarus* fore-slow;
Thy Fate.-----

Here our bard uses the word *Form* in the sense of the *Latin*, where it signifies beauty, contrary to the general meaning of the word which is beautiful in the *Latin*, but I fear hardly to be excused in *English*.

Excursions are *inexpiably* bad,
For 'tis much safer to leave out, than *add*.
Be not too fond of a sonorous line;
Good sense will thro' a plain expression shine,
Few *Painters* can such master strokes command,
As are the noblest in a skilful *band*.
In this your author will the best advise,
Fall when he *falls*, and when he rises, rise.

The two first lines are a just, but very nice criticism; for it requires perhaps a greater *Gemius* than the author you translate, besides if the poet you translate from be judicious, it will

be beyond your power to add without a botch, and excursions must dilate, and so enervate the sense; this condemns most of your paraphrastick translations: Nor is his Lordship's advice against a fondness of sonorous lines of a small consequence, but reaches original performances, as well as translations, and it were to be wished that some of our poets who pretend to be knowing in their art had discover'd this, and then we should have found fewer puffy lines in their writings. His prescribing your author for the rule of your stile in his rising and falling, seems to me infallible.

*Affected noise is the most wretched thing,
That to contempt can empty scribblers bring.*

It would be superfluous to give instances of this particular, since we have every day proofs, not only from our common poems that are frequently publish'd, with some temporary success, but even from many of our *Tragedies*, as we call them; I will not mention particulars, because I have no mind at this time to give offence to some, whose applause is deriv'd, perhaps chiefly from this.

Vowels

Vowels and *Accents* Regularly plac'd
 On even *Syllables* (and still the Last)
 Tho' gross innumerable Faults abound
 In spite of Nonsense, never fail of Sound.
 But this is meant of even Verse alone,
 As being most Harmonious and most known,
 For if you will unequal Numbers try,
 There *Accents* on odd *Syllables* must lye.

This precept of my Lords, seems to me involv'd in very great obscurity, which is a fault that ought not to be in any precept, since a rule that is not plain and clear cannot be of any use, because it conveys no instruction, his Lordship makes use of the term *Accent*, which in it self is very uncertain, and without any determinate sense, for if by *Accent* he means what the ancients meant by that word, he is certainly in the wrong, for all that we can discover from the most curious enquiries into that particular, is but a meer conjecture, that it was in the *Greek* a rising or falling, or both of the voice in certain syllables, without regard to their quantity of long or short, the knowledge of which was so far lost even in the time of *Quintilian*, that that Author confesses, that he could not deliver any rules about them, or indeed that there could

be no rules given in writing, for that which was only to be learn'd by the ear.

The *Greeks* indeed had, and I am assured still have a sort of a musical variation in their speaking, which passes from low to high, and high to low, sometimes three or four distinct Notes. The *Latins* had nothing of this, and therefore only make use of those marks of the *Greek Accents*, as the *Acute*, the *Grave*, and the *Circumflex*, to distinguish *Adverbs*, *Prepositions*, *Cases*, and the like, so that we are brought to a necessity of enquiring what my Lord means by the word *Accent*, even from a conjecture only, I therefore suppose that he means by *Accent*, the force and emphasis put upon one syllable more than another, which indeed is only the altering a receiv'd and known word for one that is obscure and unknown, he means by it a long *Syllable*, and every body knows the difference betwixt a long and a short *Syllable*, and therefore could not have err'd if he had kept to those Terms.

I am sensible that my Lord was misled by a *French* notion, that modern tongues had no quantities expressly contrary to the very nature of all languages, for there is no speech so barbarous, so very unharmonious as not to consist of short and long *Syllables*; these indeed are not varied and intermingled in the same manner in all languages.

languages, as they are in the *Latin* and the *Greek*, in some they are almost alternate, in others there will come two or three long syllables together, and then as many short ones, and this is common in the *Greek* and the *Latin*, tho' seldom so in the modern tongues, tho' it sometimes happen even there especially in the *English*, which makes it more capable of a variety in its harmony, than most other modern tongues.

There is still another obscurity in this precept of my Lord's, he says,

Vowels and Accents regularly plac'd.

What he means by *Regularly*, I cannot guess, if he means by regularly according to rule, which certainly must be the meaning of the word, where are the rules he has given us to produce this regularity, but not to insist too much upon one slip of his Lordship. I will suppose that he means, that there should be a short and a long syllable successively, always in an heroick verse, but even in that, I have prov'd his Lordship in the wrong in my *Compleat Art of Poetry*.

Whatever fister of the learned nine
 Do's to your fuit a willing ear incline,
 Urge your fuccefs, deserve a lafting name,
 She'll crown a grateful and a conftant flame;
 But if a wild *uncertainty* prevail,
 And turn your veering heart with ev'ry gale,
 You loofe the fruit of all your former care,
 For the faid profpect of a juft defpair.

This is only a confequence of his Lordfhip's
 advice to poets, to confider and confult their
 own genius; but here is a difficulty which my
 Lord does not feem to have fufficiently confider-
 ed, his precept is certainly moft juft if none
 were to hear it, and take notice of it, but men
 who know, and have judgment enough to know
 and diftinguifh what really their talent is, both
 in tranflation and compofition, but alas! there
 are very few who are fufficiently acquainted
 with their own genius and capacity, and moft
 men feem to want the advice of a very judici-
 ous friend in an affair of this nature.

Mr. Creech, who tranflated *Lucretius* with a
 great deal of applaufe, and fome merit, ventur'd
 afterwards to tranflate *Horace*, for which he was
 the moft unfit man in the World. *Lucretius* writ
 upon

upon a system of Philosophy, and therefore his subject was not improper to be translated by a student in a College, who is suppos'd to be familiarly acquainted with all subjects of that nature; but *Horace* was a courtier, conversant in the most polite court, perhaps, that ever was in the world, a man perfectly acquainted with mankind, which he discover'd in all his poetry, whether *Lyric*, *Satiric*, or *Epistolary*, and therefore could never justly be translated by a recluse sedentary collegiate, who knew nothing of mankind and the world. But besides, *Horace* writ his poems occasionally one at a time, as he was in humour, and as the subject then immediately presented it self; but Mr. *Creech* sits down to translate the whole in a little time, which had been the business of all the life of *Horace* to write in the original, that is, to do that in one year at *Oxford*, which took up *Horace* above thirty years to do in *Rome*, here I think my self obliged to clear Mr. *Dryden* of a charge brought against him by some of his enemies, on account of this very translation of *Horace*, and that is, that Mr. *Dryden* advised him in a copy of verses before the translation of *Lucretius*, to translate that *Roman* poet, thinking by that means to destroy a rising reputation, of the growth of which he was jealous, but in the first place those verses were not written by Mr. *Dryden*, but a right reverend *Prelate*, whom I shall not name tho' dead; because he thought fit to conceal his name, when

alive. In the next place, there is no impartial judge (let Mr. Creech's reputation be what it will, for his translation of *Lucretius*) who can believe that Mr. Dryden had the least cause to be apprehensive of Mr. Creech's growing applause, when he has given us his translation of several parts of that *Latin* poet, so much beyond what Mr. Creech has done.

Tho' this instance may seem sufficient for this point of translating, yet any one that will look into the version of *Ovid's* epistles, his love elegies, and part of his metamorphoses, will find many more.

If this hold good in translating, it does much more so in original compositions, I shall not instance in all the *Versifiers* and *poetasters*, that they have mistaken their talents in chusing one sort of poetry before another, because indeed they are equally incapable of all, and therefore come not under our consideration in this place, where I am only to take notice of such, who having a *genius* for some sort of poetry, have from their success in that, imagin'd themselves capable of performing in another, for which they were not the least qualified.

How

How many have I known, who have written very agreeably in the *Lyric* way, imagined from thence that they could write an *Epic* poem, others I have known, who, because they could write with justness upon a comic or ludicrous subject, persuaded themselves that they could write as well upon all those that were serious, out of great numbers I shall only instance two, and that is the author of the *splendid shilling*, and the author of the *plain dealer*, I put them not together, as if I thought there was any manner of comparison betwixt the two poets, for the author of the *Parodie*, never did any thing else worth looking on, but the other Gentleman never did any thing that was not admirable, except when he thus deviated into a path with which nature had not brought him acquainted.

This I should not have mentioned, had not the world been acquainted with the fact by his own publication of his poems.

But this folly of mistaking our talent, has spread it self into *Actors*, as well as *Writers*; thus the famous comedian *Nokes*, and the famous actress *Mrs. Verbruggen*, always had a fancy and desire to quit the *sock* for the *buskin*, but it is time to quit this subject, when I find my self
falling

falling from the failings of poets, to the follies of players.

The most useful precept that can be added to what my Lord has said is, for the dubious poet, to consult a faithful and judicious friend.

My Lord to illustrate what he has said, gives us an instance of a man midwife, who tho' he got an Estate by his business in that profession, was not satisfied, mistaking his talent, but set up for a *Quack*, and lost as much by that, as he got by the former practice.

A *Quack* (too scandalously mean to name)
 Had by *man-midwifery*, got wealth and fame,
 As if *Lucina* had forgot her trade,
 The *lab'ring wife* invokes his surer aid.
 Well-season'd bowls the gossyps spirits raise,
 Who while she guzzles, chats the doctor's praise,
 And largely, what she wants in words, supplies
 With *maudling-eloquence* of trickling eyes.

This fine illustration is plainly taken from one in the 4th *Canto* of *Boileau's* art of poetry, upon the same occasion of mens mistaking, or not knowing their talents, with this difference, that

Boileau

Boileau makes his person pass from an employment, which he did not understand to one in which he afterwards excell'd ; but my Lord makes his fool quit a beneficial business, in which he was a Master, to pursue another of which he knew so little, that it brought him to penury and starving ; but to put this in a clearer light, it seems the most proper to place them both before the eye of the reader, by which he will be the better able to judge of the performance of each poet, and this I shall do by putting them alternately, but first a little more of the *English* bard.

But what a thoughtless *animal* is man,
 How very active in his own *trepan* !
 For greedy of *Physicians* frequent fees,
 From *female mellow praise* he takes degrees,
 Struts in a new *unlicensed gown*, and then
 From *saving women* falls to killing men.
 Another, such had left the *nation thin*,
 In spite of all the children he brought in
 His *Pills* as thick as hand *Granadoes* flew,
 And where they *fell*, as certainly they *slew*.

And

And now to the *French* poet.

In *Florence* dwelt a doctor of renown,
The scourge of God, and terror of the town,
Who all the cant of physick had by heart,
And never murder'd, but by rule of art.
The publick mischief was his private gain,
Children their slaughter'd parents sought in vain,
A brother here his poison'd brother wept;
Some bloodless dy'd, and some by *Opium* slept.
Colds, at his presence, would to frenzies turn,
And agues, like malignant fevers burn.
Hated at last his practice gives him o'er,
One friend, unkill'd by drugs, of all his store,
In his new Country-house affords him place,
'Twas a rich Abbot, and a building ass.

Here in this place, let us once more hear my Lord
Roscommon,

His name struck ev'ry where as great a damp,
As *Archimedes* through the *Roman* camp.
With this the *Doctor's* pride began to cool,
For smarting soundly, may convince a fool :
But now *repentance* came too late for *grace*,
And meagre *famine* star'd him in the face.

Fain

Fain would he to the wives be reconcil'd,
 But found no *husband* left to own a *child*.
 The friends that got the brats were poison'd
 (too.

In this sad case, what could our *vermin* do?

But suspending a while the doleful catastrophe that my Lord's *Quack* brought on himself, by forsaking his known talent for a business he knew nothing of; let us see the different fate of Monsieur *Boileau's Quack*, by leaving off his *empiricism* for *architecture*.

Here first the Doctor's talent came in play,
 He seems inspir'd, and talks like *Wren* or *May*:
 Of this new portico condemns the face.
 And turns the entrance to a better place;
 Designs the stair-case at the other end:
 His friend approves, does for his Mason send,
 He comes, the Doctor's arguments prevail,
 In short, to finish this our hum'rous tale;
 He *Galen's* dang'rous science does neglect,
 And from ill Doctor turns good architect.

But now likewise, to conclude my Lord's *Quack*,
 Worry'd with debts, and past all hope of *bail*,
 Th' unpitty'd wretch lies rotting in a jail;
 And

And there with basket-aims scarce kept *alive*,
Shews how *mistaken talents* ought to thrive.

The moral which my Lord gives his *tale* is so plain
and apposite, that it needs no Notes to explain it. I
shall therefore proceed to what his Lordship says next.

I pity, from my soul, unhappy men,
Compell'd, by want, to *prostitute their pen*;
Who must, like Lawyers, either starve, or *plead*,
And follow, right or wrong, where *guineas*
(lead;
But you, *Pompilian*, wealthy pamper'd heirs,
Who to your country owe your *swords* and
(cares.

Let no vain hope your easy mind seduce,
For *rich ill poets* are without *excuse*.

His Lordship here seems involv'd in a little obscurity
The point in hand is, of men's attempting a province
of which their *genius* is not capable; that is, of those
who pretend to write poetry, and yet are not poets:
but his Lordship here seems to imply that he pities
those who have a genius, but make it a prostitute to
their gain; however this may be reconcil'd by this con-
sideration, that a man that has a genius in one kind, may
by the prospect of guineas, be tempted to write upon
subjects

subjects for which he is not at all qualified ; but this would seem an imaginary fear for evils that can never happen ; if we should judge of the times in which his Lordship writ, by the present, for that was what was call'd the *Augustane* age of *English* poets : and tho' there were no just patrons even then, yet there were some coxcombs of dignity and wealth, who would squander their guineas on some particular writer, to gratify either their malice, or their vanity. But in our time, there is no room for his Lordship's speaking ; for amongst all the numerous follies of the great, the powerful, and the wealthy, there is not one found so extravagantly prodigal, as to throw even a guinea, like the apples of *Hippomenes*, to tempt the versifying scribblers of the age to deviate from their common course, or make them wander from their talent, if they have any. But, after all, I am half of opinion, that my Lord had an eye on many of the dramatick writers of his time ; some of whom might, perhaps, have had a genius in other sorts of poetry, but for sake of what was to be got by the stage, apply'd themselves to writing of plays, for which, neither nature, nor judgment, had fitted them, merely because that was the most beneficial way which was known at that time, when almost all theatrical performances were receiv'd with more or less applause.

His Lordship farther observes, that

A rich ill poet is without excuse.

As if indeed there were any just excuse for a poor ill poet, I am sure, that bare necessity is none ; it is true, that a poor man may have a natural *genius*, and
that

that genius may be cramp'd by necessity, and render'd incapable of exerting itself with all its fire and justness, and such a man is indeed worthy of the pity of every generous spirit; but these are but very few: but to proceed,

'Tis very dangerous *tampering* with a *muse*,
The profit's small, and you have much to lose;
For, tho' true wit adorns your birth or place,
Degenerate lines degrade th' attainted race.

This maxim of his Lordship is extremely just and judicious, for, indeed, there is nothing more dangerous to the reputation of a young man of quality, of figure and distinction, than the *tampering* with a muse without any genius for poetry; and the higher his station is, the more eminent coxcomb he makes, and instead of obtaining of a publick applause, which by his verses he aims at, he by them becomes a publick jest, and his misfortune is so much the greater, as it is more remediless by the effect and influence of his quality. A low, vulgar, mean poetaster few people scruple to laugh at; and ridicule to his face; or, at least, shew a visible neglect, or contempt of his productions: but a man of quality and figure is never without slavish flatterers to make him hug his folly, and keep him ignorant of his infamy; who, when he reads his verses to them, cry out, like the Scycophant in *Horace*,

pulchre! bene! recte!

But

But not to lay all the fault upon the attendants and companions of great men, it must be confess'd, that the greatest part of it is in the great men themselves, who have such an opinion of their own poetical performances, that they never forgive the man who does not, in shew, at least, express as great an approbation as they themselves have conceived.

To all these gentlemen I would recommend the admirable temper in the person mention'd in the following matter of fact: *Mahoni* was a gentleman of good sense, great bravery, and fine literature; he had made a very considerable figure in the camp, and afterwards made a much greater in the court, without forfeiting, as far as I can understand, that character of integrity, which he had deserv'd during his foregoing life: in his youthful days he made an attempt upon poetry; by way of a song, but would not trust a copy of it out of his hands 'till he had consulted his friend *Mirabell*, a gentleman of profound learning; a very fine taste, and an exquisite judgment; but for fear that friendship should corrupt his judgment, he only read his song to him, as the product of a third person of his acquaintance: *Mirabell* had not heard much before he burst out into execrations of the scribbler, as he call'd him; but finding, before the end, that *Mahoni* was the author of this song, *Mirabell* endeavour'd to qualify the severity of his censure, that it might not be too shocking to the modesty of his friend; and therefore utter'd several favourable expressions of the performance; when the other, with all the good humour and easy temper in the world, thus gently interrupted.

No, no, my dear friend *Mirabell*, what you said, before you knew the author, was the effect of the sincerity of your judgment; what you say now is but a vain attempt, and an awkward sacrifice of friendship.-- You have cured me of poetry, and from hence forward I shall never dabble any more in rhyme; and so throwing his verses into the fire, pass'd the rest of the evening in freedom and pleasantry with *Mirabell*.

But my Lord comes now to another Precept,

No poet any passion can excite,
But what they feel transport them when they
(write.

This is from *Horace*,

----- *Si vis me flere, &c.*

He only makes me sad who shews the way,
And first is sad himself. *Ld. Roscom.*

And the line before,

We weep and laugh as we see others do.

This rule is just, and tho' it chiefly reaches original compositions, yet, it has likewise its authority in translation, for where the original is pathetick and moving the translator can never justly express his author, unless he himself enters into the passion which he translates.

Have you been lead through the *Cumæan* cave,
And heard th' impatient maid *divinely* rave?
I hear

Part of this relates to what I formerly remark'd on the same head under other words, where the poet was directed to consider, whether it was a natural or a dis-temper'd heat that warm'd him. But his Lordship here, and in the following lines, recommends an important lesson; which is, that the poet should never write but when he is in a perfect poetick humour; and then not to curb the spirit, but let it flow, the exuberancies of which he must cut off in his cooler hours; that is, he must indulge fancy when it is active, and reform its products afterwards, by judgment, and the rules of art; which precept too many of our poets of great name plainly discover that they stand in need of: fancy has not been wanting in them, but judgment, that should make that fancy truly valuable and beautiful, has not been theirs.

As when the chearful hours too freely pass,
And sparkling wine smiles in the tempting glass,
Your pulse advises, and begins to beat
Thro' every swelling vein a loud retreat.
So, when a muse propitiously invites,
Improve her favours, and indulge her flights.
But when you find that vigorous heat abate,
Leave off, and for another summons wait.

These verses are a further explanation of the former precept, but what a poet who only minds gain can never observe, for he will never wait for the return of the god; 'tis so much time lost, and the bookseller grows importunate for the finishing his copy, he wants his number of verses; and if he has but that, he does no
much

much trouble his head with what they are. I cou'd name booksellers of no vulgar reputation, who for the sake of having their copy soon finish'd, have employ'd your diligent men, as they call them, tho' they have not understood two lines of the author from whom they translated.

Before the *radiant sun* a *glimmering lamp*,
 Adult'rate metals, to the sterling stamp ;
 Appears not meaner than mere humane lines,
 Compar'd with those whose inspiration shines ;
 These nervous, bold ; those languid, and remis ;
 There cold salutes, but here a lover's kiss.

This is still to shew the advantage of writing with fury, that is, when the muse is propitious, or in plain *English*, when you are in perfect good humour, and warm, and you ought to leave off when your spirit begins to languish, this he adorns with the following *simile*.

Thus have I seen a rapid headlong tide
 With foaming waves the passive *Soan* divide ;
 Whose lazy waters without motion lay,
 While he with eager force urg'd his impetuous
 (way.

This simile carries its own marks of excellency in so plain and visible a manner, that it needs no comments to recommend it.

The priviledge that ancient poets claim,
 Now turn'd to license by too just a name; }
 Belongs to none but an *establis'd fame*, }
 Which scorns to take it. - - - - -

It were to be wish'd, that his Lordship had been a little more particular, in some instances of what he meant by privilege, that none but a man of establish'd fame has a right to; for I confess, I know of none in the *English* tongue: but his Lordship immediately gives a little further light into this matter.

Absurd expressions, crude, abortive thoughts,
 All the *lewd legion* of exploded fau'ts;
Base fugitives to that *asylum* fly,
 And *sacred laws* with *insolence* defy.

For these verses reduce them to the *expression* and the *thoughts*, which indeed, no master would be guilty of; but I know of no privilege any man has to absurd expressions, or crude, abortive thoughts: my Lord, therefore, well adds, that these fly to the *asylum* of *privilege*; that by this they may defy all sacred laws. The great favourers of these, are your gentlemen that rail at all rules, and give a latitude to writers, that leaves no room indeed for any faults or blemishes; for, if there be no rule but fancy, there is no fault: for, there is nothing so absurd but some one will fancy. My Lord cannot here mean the figurative construction of words, which all grammarians and *criticks* allow, but a strict observation of the rules will remove all these errors.

Not thus our *heroes* of the *former* days
 Deserv'd, and gain'd their never-fading bays ;
 For I mistake, or far the greatest part,
 Of what some call neglect, is study'd art.
 When *Virgil* seems to *trifle* in a line,
 'Tis like a warning-piece which gives the sign,
 To wake your fancy, and prepare your fight,
 To reach the noble height of some unusual flight.

My opinion concerning these lines you will find in my commentaries upon *the essay on poetry*, which therefore, I will not repeat here. My Lord from this head proceeds to numbers, and having paid that due praise to those of *Virgil*, he decides in general, that the ear is to be the last judge of numbers : but tho' this in some measure is true, yet there are some certain rules of numbers, else the difficulty would remain, and there would be no deciding, when they were good, and when bad, since every one wou'd not only decide by his particular ear, but also contend, that his ear is as good as another's.

I lose my patience, when with *sawcy* pride,
 By *untun'd* ears I hear *his* numbers try'd.
Reverse of nature ! shall such copies then
 Arraign th' *originals* of *Maro's* pen !
 And the rude *notions* of *pedantick* schools
 Blaspheme the sacred *founder* of our rules !

They must be strange fellows indeed, and criticise as badly as *Scaliger* has done on *Homer*, who should ar-

raign *Virgil's* numbers so sweetly diversify'd, and so often a *comment* to the *sense*. And therefore, his Lordship justly adds,

The delicacy of the nicest ear
Finds nothing *harsh*, or out of *order* there:
Sublime, or *low*, *unbended*, or *intense*,
The *sound* is still a *comment* to the *sense*.

Here his Lordship concludes his praise of *Virgil's* numbers, and very justly too; for *Virgil* almost every where expresses some image of the thing, by the numbers he uses, as,

Gemitus dedere caverna ---- Phrygia agmina circum-
spexit, &c.

And a thousand instances will justify
A skilful ear in *numbers* shou'd preside,
And all *disputes* without *appeal* decide.
This *ancient Rome* and elder *Athens* found,
Before *mistaken stops* *debauch'd* the *sound*.

My Lord, here does not mean the condemnation of all stops in verse; for that wou'd be absurd, since stops rightly understood, and plac'd, are not only necessary to the sense, but contribute very much to the true harmony of sound: but what my Lord says, is directed against *mistaken stops*, that is, wrong stops; and those, it is certain, are as injurious to the sense as sound.

When

When, by impulse from heaven, *Tyrtæus* sung,
 In drooping soldiers a new courage sprung;
 Reviving *Spartans* now the fight maintain'd,
 And what *two* generals lost, a poet gain'd.

This story of *Tyrtæus* is told in a different manner; some tell you, that upon the *Lacedemonians* sending to *Athens* for a general, by the order of an oracle, they, in contempt, sent them *Tyrtæus* a poet; but others say, that, on the *Spartan's* request, the poet was sent, and establish'd their affairs when in a desperate condition: and the *Greeks* and *Romans* wanted no address in raising the dejected soldiery, by turning their superstition against their fear. But however the *Athenians* sent *Tyrtæus*, they made a law, after the death of *Eupolis* in a sea-fight, that no poet, for the future, should go to the war: and this is a sufficient confutation of that account, which represents the sending of *Tyrtæus* to be out of contempt. And to this we may add, that poets in those days were likewise warriors.

By secret influence of indulgent skies,
 Empire and *poesy* together rise.
 True poets are the guardians of a state,
 And when they fail portend approaching fate.
 For that which *Rome* to conquest did inspire,
 Was not the *vestal*, but the *musè's* fire;
 Heav'n joyns the blessings, no declining age
 E'er felt the raptures of poetick rage.

I believe

I believe it will be here objected, that this *poetick* rage has transported his Lordship beyond historical truth, which here seems more necessary than in other pieces of poetry; for, the truth of that makes the truth of the *thought*. It must indeed be allow'd, that poetry flourish'd in the time of *Augustus*; but what *great men* in poetry did *Rome* produce from the kings 'till after the *Punick* wars? *Ammianus Marcellinus* divides the *Roman* empire into its *childhood*, during the reigns of its kings; its *youth*, from thence 'till after the *Carthaginian* conflicts; its *manhood*, from thence to the emperors; and its *old age*, under the jurisdiction of *Cæsars*, and their successors: for then, as he says, *they conquer'd by their name alone*, and the terror and glory of those former acquisitions, which they obtain'd before the *musæ* fire burn'd brightly among them. If the greatness of the empire in the time of *Augustus* be look'd on as its manhood, their dominions were farther extended in *Trajan's* reign; yet we find not any great poets then, at least, we have nothing of theirs remaining to justify the assertion. Against this objection, how plausible soever, I shall venture to offer the following considerations; tho' we have but little to shew of the *Roman* poetry before *Ennius*, yet we may trace the footsteps of it to the very *cradle*, as I may say, of that city, under her kings to the end of the first *Punick* war; the *Salian* verses were instituted by *Numa*; the twelve tables of the law were in different verse, as were their moral precepts: and it was the custom at their feasts, to speak aloud, or sing in verse to their guests the warlike actions of their ancestors.

Thus

Thus we may go on in discovering the progress of poetry in the *Roman* state from *Livius Andronicus*, after the first *Punick* war to the time of *Augustus*, when, by the study of the *Greek* poets, the *Latins* wak'd the latent spirit of poetry, and exerted that faculty which afterwards drew the admiration of posterity to this day. The *Romans* were almost perpetually in war from their first foundation, and therefore cou'd not exert that genius of peace, poetry, 'till they had now master'd the world, and ended all civil discord in a head of their own chusing, or at least, of their own approving, by giving into the hands of one, what for so long a time every great man had been striving for, to the destruction of thousands of their noblest sons; and that was compleated in the reign of *Augustus*, when *Virgil*, *Horace*, and many more, appear'd under the protection of *Mecenas* in the full lustre of poetry; and tho' *Rome*, in the time of *Trajan*, extended its limits much farther than ever before, yet the power and glory of the empire was not greater and more formidable than in the time of *Augustus*: from the reign of *Augustus* to that of *Trajan* several eminent poets appear'd, and whilst he enlarg'd the empire abroad, *Rome* gave the world several considerable poets; especially, if we take in the reign of *Adrian* likewise, as *Virgilius Romanus* a comic poet, *Mimius* a writer of *Iambicks*; *Annaeus Florus*, and *Julius Paulus*, a poet very well skill'd in ancient learning.

I therefore understand his Lordship, that all great and warlike people ever had a value for, and a genius to, poetry, which after the struggle of empire, exerted itself in glorious performances, as I have shewn of *Rome*.

I might,

I might, in the same manner, run thro' the progress of poetry in *Greece*; where, it must be confess'd, that poetry was esteem'd, even in the degeneracy of *tyranny*; witness the deference paid to *Stesichorus* by *Phalaris*: *Anacreon* sung to *Polycrates* tyrant of *Samos*, and was with him when he was seiz'd. But *Homer* (whenever his age was) evidently liv'd before the degeneracy of *Greece*; and *Athens* flourish'd in the greatest productions of poetry before the *Macedonian* empire was establish'd: however, there were many poets after that time, tho' we have not many proofs of their performances; from *Homer*, to the taking of *Athens* by *Lyfander*, we have the names of above sixscore poets and poetesses in *Greece*; from thence to the *Macedonian* monarchy about fifty; and from thence to the death of *Cleopatra* about sixty.

Our *German* ancestors, if we believe *Tacitus*, encourag'd themselves to war, by singing the great deeds of their fore-fathers: and the bards of *Britain* did the same, with such success, that *Lucan* takes notice of them,

Plurima securi fudistis carmina bardis.

All which, I think, is pretty clear of my Lord's side; for, after the visible decay of the *Roman* empire, and the inundation of barbarians; *Claudian* is the greatest, and yet he liv'd while there was some shadow of *Rome* and *Constantinople*.

Of many faults *rhyme* is, perhaps, the cause,
Too strict to *rhyme*, we slight more *useful laws*;

For

For that in *Greece* and *Rome* was never known,
 'Till by barbarian deluges o'erflown :
 Subdu'd, undone, they did at last obey,
 And change their *own* for their invaders way.

Notwithstanding the evident truth built, on experience, contain'd in these verses of his Lordship's, as I have elsewhere already shewn, there have appear'd some advocates for *rhyme*, particularly a certain doctor of *physick*, much more eminent and taken notice of, for his writings against the immortality of the soul, than for what he has said on the art of poetry and criticism; and yet he has given us a small treatise on these, both in verse and prose, I mean, in rhyme and prose: he will needs have it, that rhyme is no more a constraint to the *English* poet than *quantity* is to those of *Greece* and *Rome*; not remembering, that *quantity* is as much requir'd in *English* verse, as in *Greek* or *Latin*, with this disadvantage of our side, that we have not, and perhaps, cannot have that wonderful variety of *quantity* which those ancient languages enjoy, who by the different apposition and composition of long and short *syllables* form eight and twenty several sorts of feet of two, three, or four *syllables*, and these again are diversify'd into five and twenty sorts of verse; whereas, we are more confin'd in both, our feet consisting but of two *syllables*: we still lye under another difficulty in this particular, and that is, the *quantity* of long and short *syllables* are not ascertain'd in our language by any fix'd and known rules; whereas the *Greek* and *Latin* have their rules of *quantities* as fix'd and as establish'd as the rules of their *grammar*, which the common

mon *prosodia's* will prove beyond contradiction; but our rules of *quantities* are only determin'd by the ear, and yet are now so well known, that the meanest scribbler seldom fails in that particular. Upon these foregoing considerations, I can't but wonder how any one can attribute the transposition of words in the *Latin* verse to the poets being confin'd to the observation of *quantities*, since the great variety that I have shewn to be fix'd. and known in those tongues, can never leave them under any difficulty, or bring them under any necessity to incur absurdities to preserve them; and that it is plain, that we lye under an equal necessity of *quantities* in our verse with those of the antients, since without numbers or *quantities*, call them which you please, or a judicious mixture of long and short syllables, what you write will be down-right prose, notwithstanding it be tagg'd with rhyme or jingle: I will not quarrel with the Doctor about a word, he shall have my consent to term what I call a long syllable an *accent*, as the profound Mr. *Bysshe* does in his *art of English poetry*, which indeed is nothing but the knack of versifying; because my Lord *Roscommon*, in this present essay, has inadvertently made use of the same word.

But to say all that I have to urge upon this head, would make my disquisition swell to a much larger bulk than is proper for this place, I shall only therefore add, that the confinement of rhyme beyond that of quantity, is plain and visible from this consideration, that the *Latin* and *Greek* poet has the whole language before him to pick out a word proper to his use; but the *English* rhiming poet is often confin'd to
stick

stick to three or four words, and seldom has above a dozen to chuse from, because of the tyranny of rhyme which obliges him to two words of the same sound. But now let's go on with my Lord,

I grant that from *some mossy, idol oak*
In *double rhymes* our *Thor* and *Woden* spoke,
And by succession of unlearned times,
As *bards* began, so *monks* rung on the *chimes*.

I am afraid that my Lord here is something mistaken, because the *druids* and *bards* were *British*, and not *Saxon* teachers and poets, but *Thor* and *Woden* were *Saxon* deities, and establish'd in this island long after the extirpation of the *druids* and *bards*, by the intervention of the christian religion; but that is of no great consequence to the argument, since whatever antiquity may be pleaded for the use of rhyme in the eastern nations, it is certain that it was brought into *Europe* by ignorant and unlearned times.

But now that *Phæbus* and the sacred nine
With all their beams on our blest island shine;
Wyy shou'd not *we* their antient *rites* restore,
And be what *Rome* or *Athens* were before?

Tho' this noble emulation which my Lord generously endeavours to stir up in the poets of his time be worthy his excellent parts, yet I am afraid, for one of them that were inspir'd, ten were possess'd. The ease and luxury of King Charles's reign coming after
twenty

twenty years sowering and intolerable hypocrisy, made pleasure and gayety spread, and smooth versifying grew more common, and there was indeed the spirit of the age in the writers: but the true spirit of poetry I am afraid was not so far diffused; that prince gave not encouragement enough to great masters, and only those whom necessity threw on the stage made any figure, and even there the profits or gain were much too inconsiderable to arrive at perfection, which was yet hinder'd more by a false taste which they had contracted by reading *French* romances; so that nature, the true object of poetry, was seldom seen; but by one or two whose force of genius bore them thro' all the obstacles of evil custom: no, there must be a greater care of arts before poetry will arrive at the *Greek* and *Roman* greatness.

Oh! may I live to hail the glorious day,
 And sing loud *pæans* thro' the crouded way;
 When in triumphant state the *British* muse,
 True to herself, shall barb'rous aid refuse,
 And in the *Roman* majesty appear,
 Which none know better, and none come so
 (near.

This my Lord confirms by the following quotation,
 or imitation of *Milton*,

Have we forgot how *Raphael's* num'rous prose
 Led our exalted souls thro' heavenly camps,
 And

And mark'd the ground where proud apostate
(thrones

Defy'd *Jehovah*! here, twixt host and host
(A narrow, but a dreadful interval)

Portentous sight! before the cloudy van
Satan with vast and haughty strides advanc'd,
Came tow'ring, arm'd in adamant and gold.

There bellowing engines, with their fiery tubes
Dispers'd æthereal forms, and down they fell
By thousands, angels on arch-angels rowl'd;
Recover'd, to the hills they ran, they flew,
Which (with their pond'rous load, rocks, wa-
(ters, woods)

From their firm seats torn by the shaggy tops,
They bore like shields before them thro' the
(air,

'Till more incens'd, they hurl'd them at their
(foes;

All was confusion, heav'n's foundation shook,
Threat'ning no less than universal wreck :

For *Michael*'s arm main promontories flung,
And over-prest whole legions weak with sin;
Yet they blasphem'd, and struggl'd, as they lay,
'Till the great ensign of Messiah blaz'd;

And (arm'd with vengeance) God's victorious
(son

(Effulgence of paternal deity)

Grasping ten thousand thunders in his hand,

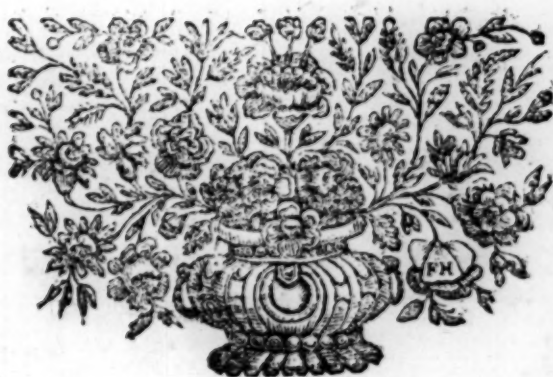
Drove the old original rebels headlong down,
And sent them flaming to the vast abyfs.

Thus I have gone through my Lord Roscommon's *essay* on translated verse, which, to recapitulate, affords us these useful lessons, — — — that we ought to have, and by consequence observe, *rules* in composition, as well as in translating verse; that we ought to purge off all manner of pedantry, if we hope the favour of the muses; that we ought carefully to study our own genius and inclination, to what sort of poetry that carries us to make any just progress in the art, and arrive at fame and reputation, and then to chuse a poet of the same genius to translate, and then we may find applause, *and be no longer his interpreter, but he*: that we ought to regard neither the frowns, nor flatteries of any in this undertaking, nor use our infant-muse to any thing that is immodest, since immodest words always want decency, and often sense.

That we shou'd therefore make choice of a subject that is moral and great, and worthy a poet, and no trivial thing which merits contempt; that besides the goodness of the subject, it must be capable of affording delight; that there ought to be a strict harmonious symetry of parts, inform'd by a pure active and auspicious flame, the genuine result of nature, not of affectation or distemper; that we must avoid pride, the true child of ignorance; that we must bestow a great deal of pains to understand our author perfectly, else we shall rather confound than translate, and the clearness of our stile will shew this.

That

That in translating we must avoid sticking to names which are beautiful enough in the *Latin*, tho' they will not bear in another language; that we ought not to make any excursions in translating, for 'tis safer to leave out than add; that we shou'd not be fond of sonorous lines, but mind sense more than sound; that we rise with our author, and fall with him, and avoid the affected noise of empty scribblers; that degenerate verses disgrace a man of fortune; *for a rich ill poet is without excuse*: that we must write with fury, and correct with phlegm; that we must not shelter our absurdities under the specious name of poetick licence or privilege; that the ear is to be the judge of numbers and measure; that rhyme is the origin of many faults; that we, therefore, ought to reject the barbarous aid, and depend entirely on the native energy and harmony of our language, and the force and fire of our own genius.





CONCERNING
Unnatural Flights
IN
POETRY,

By the RIGHT HONOURABLE
The Lord LANSDOWNE.



When some image of a
charming face
In lively paint an artist tries
to trace,
He carefully consults each
beauteous line,
Adjusting to his object his
design ;

We praise the piece, and give the painter fame,
But as the bright resemblance speaks the dame ;

Poets are limners of another kind,
To copy out idæas in the mind;
Words are the paint by which their thoughts
(are shown,
And nature is their object to be drawn :
The written picture we applaud, or blame,
But as the just proportions, are the same.

Who, driven with ungovernable fire,
Or void of art, beyond these bounds aspire :
Gigantick forms, and monstrous births alone
Produce, which nature thock'd, disdains to own.
By true reflection I would see my face,
Why brings the fool a magnifying glass?

Obj. 1.) But poetry in fiction takes delight,
And mounting up, in figures out of sight,
Leaves truth behind in her audacious flight.
2.) Fables, and metaphors, that always lye,
3.) And bold hyperboles, that soar so high,
And every ornament of verse must die.

Ans^w.) Mistake me not --- no figures I exclude,
And but forbid intemperance, not food.
Who would with care some happy fiction
(frame,
So mimicks truth, it looks the very same;
Not rais'd to force, or feign'd in nature's scorn,
But mean to grace, illustrate, and adorn.

Important

Important truths, still let your fables hold,
 And moral mysteries with art unfold :
 Ladies and beaux, to please, is all the task,
 But the sharp critick will instruction ask.

As veils transparent cover, but not hide,
 Such metaphors appear, when right apply'd ;
 When thro' the phrase we plainly see the sense,
 Truth, when the meaning's obvious, will dis-
 (pence :

The Reader, what in reason's due, believes,
 Nor can we call that false, which not deceives.

Hyperboles, so daring and so bold,
 Disdaining bounds, are yet by rules controul'd ;
 Above the clouds, but yet within our sight,
 They mount with truth, and make a tow'r-
 (ing flight,

Presenting things impossible to view,
 They wander thro', incredible, too true :
 Falshoods thus mix'd, like metals are refin'd,
 And truth, like silver, leaves the dross behind.

Thus poetry has ample space to soar,
 Nor needs forbidden regions to explore :
 Such vaunts as his who can with patience bear,
 Who thus describes his hero in the war ?

4.) * *In heat of action, combates being slain,
And after death, still do's the fight maintain.*

The noisy culvering, o'ercharg'd lets fly,
And burst unaiming, in the rended sky ;
Such frantick flights are like a mad-man's
(dream,
And naure suffers in the wild extream.

5) The *Roman* wit, who impiously divides
His hero and his gods to different sides,
I would condemn, but that, in spite of sense,
Th' admiring world still stands in his defence.
How oft, alas ! the best of men in vain
Contend for blessings that the worst obtain !
The gods permitting traytors to succeed,
Become not parties in an impious deed :
And by the tyrant's murder, we may find,
That *Cato* and the gods were of a mind.

Thus forcing truth, with such prepostrous praise,
Our characters we lessen, when we'd raise ;
Like castles built by magick art in air,
That vanish at approach, such thoughts appear :

* Taken from Ariosto.

But

But rais'd on truth by some judicious hand,
As on a rock, they shall for ages stand.

Our king return'd, and banish'd peace restor'd,
The muse ran mad, to see her exil'd lord,
On the crack'd stage the *Bedlam* heroes roar'd,
And scarce cou'd speak one reasonable word.

6.) *Dryden* himself, to please a frantick age,
Was forc'd to let his judgment stoop to rage ;
To a wild audience he conform'd his voice,
Comply'd to custom, but not err'd thro' choice.
Deem then the people's, not the writer's sin,
Almanzor's rage, and rants of *Maximin* :
That fury spent in each elaborate piece,
He vies for fame with antient *Rome* and

(*Greece*.

Roscommon first, then *Mulgrave* rose like
no man (light,

To clear our darkness, and to guide our
(flight ;

With steady judgment, and in lofty sounds,
They gave us patterns, and they set us bounds :
The *Stagyrite* and *Horace* laid aside,
Inform'd by them, we need no foreign guide.

Who seek from poetry a lasting name,
May in their lessons learn the road to fame ;

But

But let the bold adventurer be sure
 That every line the test of truth endure :
 On this foundation may the fabrick rise,
Firm and unshaken 'till it touch the skies.
 From pulpits banish'd, 'from the court, from
 (love,
 Abandon'd truth seeks shelter in the grove,
 Cherish ye muses, the forsaken fair,
 And take into your train this wanderer.

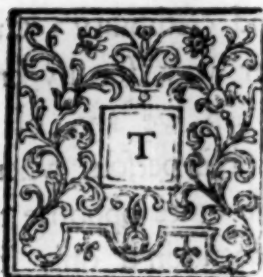


EXPLA-



EXPLANATORY
ANNOTATIONS
ON THE
Foregoing POEM.

1.)



THE poetick world is nothing but fiction ; Parnassus, Pegasus, and the muses, pure imagination and chimæra : But being however a system, universally agreed on, all that shall be contriv'd or invented upon this foundation according to nature, shall be reputed as truth : But whatsoever shall diminish from, or exceed the just proportions of nature, shall be rejected as false, and pass for extravagance, as dwarfs and gyants for monsters.

2.) When *Homer*, mentioning *Achilles*, terms him a lyon, this is a metaphor, and the meaning is obvious and

and true, though the literal sense be false: The poet intending thereby, to give his reader some idea of the strength and fortitude of his hero. ----- Had he said, ----- That wolf, or that bear, this had been false, by presenting an image not conformable to the nature, or character of a hero, &c.

3.) Hyperboles are of divers sorts, and the manner of introducing them is different: Some are, as it were, naturaliz'd, and establish'd by a customary way of expression, as when we say, such a one's as swift as the wind, whiter than snow, or the like: *Homer*, speaking of *Hireus*, calls him beauty itself; *Martial*, of *Zoilus*, lewdness itself. Such hyperboles lye indeed, but deceive us not; and therefore *Seneca* terms them lyes, that readily conduct our imagination to truths, and have an intelligible signification, though the expression be strain'd beyond credibility: Custom has likewise familiariz'd another way for hyperboles, for example, by irony, as when we say, of some very infamous woman, she's a civil person, where the meaning's to be taken in a sense quite opposite to the letter. These few figures are mention'd only for example's sake; it will be understood, that all others are to be us'd with the like care and discretion.

4.) These lines taken from *Ariosto*. The author need not have travell'd so far from home to fetch nonsense; but he chose rather to correct in the gentlest manner, by a foreign example, hoping that such as are conscious of the like extravagances, will take the hint, and

and secretly reprove themselves, *Quodcunque ostendis mihi sic incredulus odi*. It may be possible for some tempers to maintain rage and indignation to the last gasp ; but the soul and body once parted, there must necessarily be a determination of action, &c.

5.) *Victrix causa deis placuit, sed victa Catoni.*

The consent of so many ages having establish'd the reputation of this line, the author, perhaps, may be judg'd too presuming in this attack ; but he cou'd not suppose that *Cato*, who is describ'd to have been a man of strict devotion, and more resembling the gods than men, would choose any party in opposition to the gods. The poet would give us to understand, that his hero was too generous to accompany the gods themselves in an unjust cause. But to represent a man to be either wiser, or juster than God, may shew the impiety of the writer, but can add nothing to the lustre of the hero, since neither reason, nor religion will allow it ; and it is impossible in nature for a corrupt being to be more excellent than a divine : Besides, success implies permission, and not approbation ; to place the gods always on the thriving side, is to make them partakers in all successful wickedness : They judge before the conclusion of the action : The catastrophe will best determine on which side is providence. And the violent death of *Cesar* acquits the gods from being companions of his usurpation.

6.) Mr.

6.) Mr. *Dryden* in some prologue has these two lines,

*He's bound to please, not to write well; and knows
There is a mode in plays, as well as cloaths.*

Let the censurers of Mr. *Dryden* therefore be satisfied, that where he has expos'd himself to be critic'd, it has been only when he has endeavour'd to follow the fashion, to humour others, and not to please himself. It may likewise be observ'd, that at the time when those characters were form'd, bullying was altogether the mode, off the stage, as well as upon it. And though that humour is since much abated in the conversation of the world, yet there remains so far a relish for it, that to this day an audience is never so well pleas'd as when an actor foams with some extravagant rant, neither can we ever expect a thorough reformation of this sacrifice to the people, 'till the writer has some more certain encouragement than the bare profits of a third day : For, those who write to live, will be always under a necessity to comply in some measure with the generality, by whose approbation they subsist.

Mr. *Dryden*, for further satisfaction in his epistle dedicatory to the *Spanish Fryar*, thus censures himself ;
 " I remember some verses of my own, *Maximin* and
 " *Almanzor*, which cry vengeance upon me, for
 " their extravagance, &c. All I can say for those
 " passages, which are, I hope, not many, is, that I
 " knew they were bad enough to please, even when I
 " writ them : But I repent of them among my sins :
 And

“ And if any of their fellows intrude by chance into
 “ my present writing, I draw a stroke over all those
 “ *Dalilah's* of the theatre ; and am resolv'd I will
 “ settle myself no reputation by the applause of fools :
 “ 'Tis not that I am mortify'd to all ambition, but
 “ I scorn as much to take it from half-witted judges,
 “ as I shou'd to raise an estate, by cheating of bubbles ;
 “ neither do I discommend the lofty stile in tragedy,
 “ which is naturally pompous and magnificent. But
 “ nothing is truly sublime that is not just and pro-
 “ per. ” Epistle Dedicatory to the *Spanish Fryar*.

This may serve for a standing apology for Mr. *Dry-*
den against all his criticks ; and likewise for an un-
 questionable authority, to confirm those principles which
 the author of the foregoing poem has pretended to
 lay down, &c.



F I N I S.

(178)



MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

